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FRANK COLBY

YOUR SPEECH

AND HOW TO
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YOUR SPEECH
AND HOW TO IMPROVE IT

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*A New and Simplified Method of
Correcting Many of the Common Faults
in the Pronunciation and Usage of
The American Language*

BY FRANK COLBY

REVISED EDITION

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To My Son

CONTENTS

I	MEND YOUR SPEECH	3
	The importance of correct speech and correct usage. You are judged by your pronunciation and your choice of words.	
II	THE LANGUAGE OF AMERICA	9
	How and why the speech of the United States differs from that of Great Britain.	
III	THE COLBY PHONETIC SYSTEM	23
	How the new and simple system of pronunciation employed in this book actually <i>works</i> . This is explained so anyone can understand it.	
IV	VOCABULARY: A to Z	33
	A glossary of words most frequently mispronounced. Correct pronunciations clearly and accurately presented by the Colby System of phonetic spelling.	
V	WHAT'S IN A NAME?	269
	How to pronounce several hundred proper names of common occurrence.	
VI	NAMES OF OPERAS	289
VII	FAMOUS COMPOSERS	293
VIII	BOTANICAL NAMES	297

IX	THE PROPER CHOICE OF WORDS	305
	It is important not only to pronounce words correctly, but also to use the right word in the right place.	
X	ORIGINS OF FAMILIAR EXPRESSIONS	387
	Interesting and valuable information on the derivation of common terms.	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	421

YOUR SPEECH
AND HOW TO IMPROVE IT

I

MEND YOUR SPEECH

STRANGERS judge us first by our appearance and next by our speech. A well-groomed appearance stamps one immediately as a pleasant person of cleanly habits. Well-ordered and accurate speech has ever been the sign of a well-ordered mind, of culture and refinement.

Indeed, we are told that the Athenians of ancient Greece were so intolerant of error that they soundly hissed the unfortunate orator who mispronounced even a single word.

Happily, we are not hissed at today for slovenly speech; but we are judged by it, and, more often than not, we are penalized for it in the low esteem of our fellows.

But the common speech of America, I am delighted to report, is reversing the hitherto decided trend toward a barbarous slipshoddiness (to coin a term) that threatened to reduce our spoken language almost to the level of the grunt-and-twitter speech of the Pygmy. We may give thanks to the radio and to the talking picture for having brought to life a national desire for speech improvement. But we still have a long, brier-strewn path to travel.

We must first learn to speak instead of mumbling. Perhaps the most prevalent bad speech habit is the running together of words. Breathlessly, the little girl next door rushes into my study to repeat a jingle she has just learned:

Mair see toats,
 And hair see toats,
 And little antsee tivey.
 Sometimes skidsee tivey, too;
 But *foodledoo* for you! *

I am aghast. "Do I understand you to say *foodledoo* for me?"

"Yes," she cries gleefully, "*foodledoo* for you!"

A little later, when the moppet's vocal tangle has been unraveled, patiently, thread by thread, syllable by syllable, I begin to see the light:

Mares eat oats,
 And hares eat oats,
 And little ants eat ivy.
 Sometimes kids eat ivy, too;
 But *food'll* do for you.

Is the foregoing illustration overdrawn? Let us see:

In common speech, *What are you thinking of?* becomes "Whachuh thinkin' nuv?" *Is he going home?* invariably is "Izzee goin' nome?" The expression *Your neck is sturdy* is indistinguishable from "Your neck's dirty."

If I had not recognized the melody of *Home, Sweet Home*, I should never have known what song the l-g-n-d was singing in her thin and wavering treble:

Be id deverse oh wumbull,
 There *snow play sly comb*.

We shall progress far along the road to better speech when we begin to give to our words all the syllables they should have. Even in the chaste pronouncements of presidents of American universities it is not uncommon to hear: "AN-yull" for *annual*, "kernt" for *current*, "fawrn" for *foreign*, "awrnge" for *orange*, "p'TIK-lee" for *particularly*, "GUV-munt" for *government*, and "WAWRSH-in-dun" for *Washington*.

Our schools go to no little trouble in drilling us on correct spelling and English. Since we speak far more than we either read or write, we should also be taught accuracy of speech.

* Mr. Colby used this little verse three years before the introduction of the song "Mairzy Doats."

Another important milestone will have been passed when at last we realize that, in English, words can seldom be pronounced as they are spelled. Then, and then only, shall we cease to hear "too-WAWRD" for *toward*, "FAWR-head" for *forehead*, "zoo-LAH-ji-kul" for *zoological*, and "ROOZE-uh-velt" for *Roosevelt*. Yes, by now we should know that our language is a tongue that is completely unphonetic.

We shall not be very far from our goal when we acquire the habit of consulting a reliable American dictionary for the pronunciation of even the simplest and most familiar word. Perhaps that is looking toward the millennium; but this would be a far sweeter world if we should no longer hear "IN-trist-ing" for *interesting*, "KEW-pahn" for *coupon*, "SIM-yoo-ler" for *similar*, "uh-TAK-ted" for *attacked*, "be-KUZZ" for *because*, "EYE-dear" for *idea*, "KAHL-yum" for *column*, and "PROE-gr'm" for *program*.

Almost every person has in his speech certain bad linguistic habits of which he is not aware. For the most part, these are either survivals of the faltering accents of childhood, faults acquired from incompetent teachers, or irregularities in pronunciation that have been passed down through the generations with other family antiques.

It is sometimes more than a little difficult to shake off such speech errors, as these true-life examples will attest:

A capable dramatics teacher has always said "OYS-chers" for *oysters*. A former fellow townsman, now a radio question-and-answer man, still uses the erroneous pronunciation "PROE-gr'm" for *program*, despite several years of breasting the airways. An erudite lawyer says "lawr" for *law* and "sawr" for *saw*. The secretary of a certain advertising association has never learned that *publicity* should not be pronounced "pew-BLISS-uh-tee."

A network broadcaster of Southern birth has more than once been heard to say "like" for *lack*, as: "He *liked* several votes of having a majority."

A writer of sonnets always becomes covered with "whelps" when she is stung by mosquitoes, although she must know that a *whelp* is a newborn puppy and is neither a swelling

nor a wale (sometimes erroneously called *welt*) on the skin.

For centuries, we Americans have twitted the British for dropping the letter "h." But even in the most cultured American speech, it is not uncommon to hear "yoomer," "'umble," "yooman," "yoomanity," "yoomiliating," "w'ich," "w'eel," "w'y," "w'en," "w'ether."

Listen to the conversation of these Americans of average education:

First speaker: "Oo izzat wi' ther?"

Second speaker: "You mean *nim*?"

First speaker: "Yes, soo izzee?"

Second speaker: "Let's asker. Oh, Jane, come mere and bringim with you."

Jane: "I can't; we're goin *nome*."

Yes, it is a phenomenon in the linguistic comedy of errors that each of us believes his accents to be the *ne plus ultra* of beauty and correctness. Most of us are completely unaware of certain faults in our own speech, yet hear the same mistakes plainly in the accents of others.

After speaking at length on the subject of correct pronunciation before a group of literary women, I closed my lecture by strongly emphasizing three common mispronunciations that, to me, are vulgarisms bordering on the obscene. "If you are accustomed to saying 'yore' for *your*, 'IN-trist-ing' for *interesting*, and (most revolting of all!) 'PROE-gr'm' for *program*," I said, "begin this very day to purge these gross errors from your speech."

Polite applause.

Then arose the beaming Madam Chairman, to deliver the customary speech of thanks. Said she: "We want you to know how much we have enjoyed 'yore IN-trist-ing PROE-gr'm'!"

As to broadcasting, since the listener of today has a fearfully educated ear, no lay speaker should dare to face a microphone until he has received a little training in the rudiments of broadcasting. We should be spared the dreadful dronings, the animal-like mumblings, the incredible gibberish of the average lay speaker, male and female.

Indeed, perfection is not to be found in the ranks of pro-

fessional broadcasters. Not long ago, the manager of a radio station wrote me: "I think you are a little intemperate in pointing out the mistakes in pronunciation of announcers and commentators. It is my belief that they are fairly accurate."

I cannot agree that "fairly accurate" is good enough. Imagine a fairly accurate surgeon, a fairly accurate accountant, a fairly accurate prescriptionist! What would a newspaper editor do about a reporter whose spelling, grammar, and *facts* were only fairly accurate?

No, it is not unreasonable to expect of the professional broadcaster the same skill in the use of the tool of his craft, the spoken word, that is demanded, say, of a journeyman brickmason in the use of the trowel. What a crazy structure the latter would erect if his bricklaying was only "fairly accurate."

The way one speaks is one's own business; but when one speaks on the radio, it is everybody's business.

As I pause to read what I have thus far written, I find that I have used much space in attempting to put into words what Shakespeare said in a single sentence more than three hundred years ago:

Mend your speech a little,
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

II

THE LANGUAGE OF AMERICA

WHY IS IT that our tongue is a *lingua incognita* so far as pronunciation is concerned? The answer lies in a better understanding of the complexities of the remarkable language that is ours.

Ask this question of any American of average education: "What language do you speak?" After a quick glance of surprise, he will answer: "Why, English, of course, and pretty pure English, too." But he will be wrong, for, as we shall soon see, "pure English" exists only in the imagination.

What about the original Anglo-Saxon? Anglo-Saxon is a blending of the dialects of the several Teutonic hordes that invaded the British Isles during the fifth and sixth centuries. It is a degenerated form of Low German, closely akin to the Plattdeutsch of northern Germany, the Dutch of Holland, and the Flemish of Belgium. The word *English* (*Englisc* or *Aenglisc*) means "of or pertaining to the Angles." Of the six hundred thousand words in the unabridged dictionary, only a small number are of Anglo-Saxon origin (twenty per cent is the usual estimate). Our medical and legal terms are chiefly Latin. Our musical terms are Italian. Our diplomatic and military phraseology is French, a language that has also given us our vocabulary of the cuisine. Our scientific words are Greek. The remaining words in our linguistic structure represent virtually every other known language, ancient and modern. Anglo-Saxon, though, is the mortar that binds the rubble together.

Because it is a polyglot, our language is a speech of unparalleled richness, of matchless beauty and delicacy of expression, of youthfulness, inventiveness, and virility. But it is also one of the most difficult of all languages to learn, for it is full of inconsistencies, gross contradictions, meaningless idioms, nonsensical grammar, impossible spelling, and horrendous pronunciations.

Let us skim a little dross from the top of our melting pot and examine a few of the oddities to be found there:

There is no word in our language that means what we think *umbrella* means. An *umbrella* (from the Latin *umbra*, "shade"), literally, is "a little sunshade." *Parasol* (from *para*, "to ward off," and *sol*, "the sun") likewise means "sunshade."

We have no word for "a citizen of the United States." An *American* is properly a native of any country of North, Central, or South America. The new *Webster's* timidly advances *United-States-man*, but we have only to say the word aloud to know that it will never do.

In the average vocabulary, there are thousands of words such as *coupon*, *cousin*, *edition*, *garage*, *invitation*, *lecture*, *machine*, *orange*, *portrait*, *public*, *regiment*, *terrible*, *lingerie*, *corsage*, *chiffon*, *camisole*, *brassière*, and *café*, not a single one of which is English. Each is as French as the left bank of the Seine. But in France, *lingerie* means "linen clothing" or "a linen closet"; *corsage* means, not "a small bouquet," but "the human bust"; *chiffon* means an "old and worthless rag"; *camisole* is "a binding for the stomach of an infant" or "a straitjacket"; *brassière* is "a knapsack"; and *café* is "coffee" or "a coffeehouse."

The English language contains hundreds of turncoat words that, from centuries of misuse, have completely lost or entirely reversed their original meanings—words that have become degenerated, corrupted, and, sometimes, completely dishonest.

Call a man an *idiot*, and you have insulted him. But the word has not always meant "a dullard," "a simpleton," "an imbecile." The original Greek word, *idiotes*, merely designated "a private citizen not engaged in any public office," as opposed to priests and public officials.

A *pagan*, to begin with, was not "one who worships false gods" or "an irreligious person." The word derives from the Latin *pagus*, "village," and meant simply "a villager," "a peasant."

Likewise, *heathen* was once a most respectable term. It was an honest, bucolic word from the Anglo-Saxon *haeth* ("heath"), and meant "a dweller in the country or on the heath."

If you had lived in the Middle Ages, you would not have resented being spoken of as *silly*. The word did not mean "foolish," "simple," "fatuous." No; a *silly* person was "good," "kind," "cheerful," "fortunate," "happy." The original word was spelled *seely*. Its correct meaning survives today in the German *selig*, meaning "blessed," "happy," "blissful."

Are you a *blackguard*? Not today, fortunately. But, in the time of the Tudors, when the word was coined, as a member of the royal *guard* you would have worn your *black* uniform with pride.

Shakespeare wrote: "What a brazenfaced *varlet* art thou!" And there is no mistaking his meaning: "knave," "low fellow," "scoundrel." But during the Crusades, *varlets* were young noblemen apprenticed to knights for instruction in chivalry and the bearing of arms.

When Junior's naughtiness has given us an especially trying day, we threaten to punish the little *imp*; and we thus employ an entirely proper word, for its literal meaning is "a bud or a shoot of a tree"; hence, by extension, "an offspring," "a child." In the Beauchamp Chapel at Warwick, England, is an epitaph, dated 1584, that reads: "Here resteth the body of the noble *Impe* Robert of Dudley, sonne of Robert Erle of Lycester."

Thousands of busy factories make the United States the world's greatest *manufacturing* nation. The word *manufacture* is another brazen fibber; it properly means "to make by hand," from the Latin *manus*, "hand," and *factura*, "the act of making."

In modern language, a *jewel* is "a precious stone," "an ornament of great value." But the word has evolved from the

Middle English *juel* through the Latin *jocus*, "a jest" or "a trivial plaything of no value." *Joke* also derives from *jocus*.

The overworked adjective *nice* is descriptive of anything or anybody that is "pleasant," "agreeable," "desirable," "closely discriminative." It has done a complete about-face, for the original meaning of a *nice person* was "a foolish, ignorant simpleton." The word had its origin in the Latin *nescire*, from *ne-*, "not," and *scire*, "to know"; hence, "know-nothing."

A big-mouthed, pretentious speaker is said to fill the air with *bombast*. Literally, such a thing is impossible, for the word comes from the Old French *bombace*, "cotton." Later, *bombast* designated any soft material used for stuffing or padding. By extension, then, *bombast* today means "an inflated or swollen manner of speaking."

Anything that is *trivial* is "of no importance," "trifling," "petty." The origin of the word is indeed curious. In ancient Rome, matters of State were debated at the Forum. But at a certain place in the city, three streets came together, and it was here that noisy, chattering crowds gathered each day in idle gossip. The three way intersection was known as the *Tri-via*, "Three Roads." Thus, trifling talk or anything of little importance came to be known as of *tri-via* source, or *trivial*.

The schoolboy *by Jimminy!* has grown out of a sacred Roman oath. The twin stars, Castor and Pollus, are known by the title *Gemini*, the Latin word for "twins." The Romans regarded the stars as gods, and they used to witness their most solemn vows *by Gemini!*

Our highest title of respect for a woman is the word *lady*. But the word has a very humble, indeed menial, origin. It has evolved from the Anglo-Saxon *hlaedige*, which meant "loaf maid" or "the kneader and baker of bread."

Lord originally referred neither to a nobleman nor to the deity. *Lord* is the modern form of the Anglo-Saxon *hlaf-weard*, "the keeper of the loaf"; hence, "the guardian of the household food supply."

Imagine the shocked surprise of a dignified *steward* who

learns that the word has grown out of the Middle English *stiward*, "the warden of the sty" or "the keeper of the pigs"!

The modern term for one that seeks office is *candidate*. But the Latin word from which it sprang, *candidus*, means "glittering white." What possible connection can there be? An aspirant to office in ancient Rome went about in public with his robes made spotlessly white with chalk. The glittering whiteness of his garments symbolized the purity of his purpose in seeking election to public office. *Candid* and *candor* have the same origin.

Why is a *tubero* so called, since it is neither a tube nor a rose, but a bulbous herb with a lilylike flower? The name *tubero* is an erroneous translation of the Latin *tuberosa*, which means "having tubers," "tuberous." Thus we see that the imperfect Latin of some long-forgotten, obscure botanist attests the truth of Shakespeare's observation: "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Did the name *dandelion* result from a fancied resemblance of the flower to the luxuriant tawny mane of a feline Beau Brummel? No; *dandelion* is simply a corruption of the French phrase *dent de lion*, meaning "a lion's tooth," probably from the toothlike edge of the leaves of the plant.

No word has a more horrid implication than *cannibal*. Yet we read into the word a meaning that, literally, it does not have. The Spaniards borrowed the term from the Carib Indian word *galibi*, which meant nothing more shocking than "strong men."

If we are invited to a *matinee*, we shall expect to spend the afternoon at the theater. But the word is from the French *matin*, "before noon," "morning."

We see nothing amiss in naming one of our larger monthly magazines for women *The Journal*. The literal meaning of the French *journal* (from *jour*, "day") is "a day book."

The word *journey* suggests rather prolonged traveling, as "a journey around the world," "a journey through life." We have the word from the French *journée*, properly meaning "a day's travel," which, in the Middle Ages, was estimated to be but twenty miles.

To Americans especially, the word *travel* implies an excit-

ing, enjoyable experience, although this is but another spelling of *travail*, "to labor," "to be in torment," which is evidence of the great physical effort and extreme discomfort of traveling in former days.

Is a *burglar* related to a *burgess*, "the magistrate of a borough"? The words are closely akin, for both have evolved from the Latin *burgus*, "a fortified place."

A *bugle* is a wind instrument, the particular nemesis of the man enlisted in the army. *Bugle* springs from the Latin *buculus*, meaning "a young bull." This may have arisen from comparing the call of the bugle with the constant bawling of the male calf.

In the heyday of the theatrical stock company, life held no greater satisfaction than roundly hissing the crafty *villain* who bound the blond and defiant heroine to the railroad track because she refused to: (a) "Sign those papers!" or (b) "Become my wife!" But it is a far cry from the suave and knavish *villain* of the melodrama to the original *villein*, a simple rustic who lived in a *village*.

In the preceding paragraph, the words *crafty* and *knavish* are used in the correct present-day sense. But not so long ago *crafty* meant "skilled at a craft or trade," and a *knave* was merely "a boy," "a young male servant."

To many of us, the gladdest day of all is payday. *Salary* means money to spend, to pay on debts, or to put away for a rainy day. How much more fortunate are we than was the Roman soldier, whose *salary* (*salarium*) was but a few pence with which to buy a little *salt* (*sal*). This also gives us the origin of the expression: *to be worth one's salt*.

There are many among us who take pride in *culture*—that is, in refinement of taste, in the appreciation of things intellectual and aesthetic. Basically, though, *culture* is an earthy, bucolic word that means literally "the cultivation or tilling of the soil." This is not surprising if we recall such familiar words as *agriculture* and *horticulture*.

Our tongue is richer than most others in idioms—expressions that, taken literally, are not only untrue but are incomprehensible as well. For example, no foreigner could

translate such absurdities as: "*There is no one here.*" "*The gas went out.*" "*I can see nothing in the room.*"

As to the horrors of English spelling and pronunciation, let us examine a unique phenomenon among languages: in English, we do not spell *sounds* at all, but only *words*.

There are forty-two sounds in the English language. To express them in print we have an alphabet of only twenty-six letters, three of which—"c," "q," and "x"—are unnecessary. Of the forty-two sounds, eighteen are vowel sounds that must be expressed with but six characters: "a," "e," "i," "o," "u," and "y."

But there are at least twelve ways of spelling the long "ē" sound: "e," as in *be*; "ee," as in *see*; "ea," as in *cheap*; "ie," as in *believe*; "ey," as in *key*; "ei," as in *seize*; "i," as in *machine*; "eo," as in *people*; "ay," as in *quay* (correctly pronounced: *kee*); "ae," as in *Caesar*; "oe," as in *Phoebe*; and "ue," as in *Portuguese*.

There are thirteen ways of spelling the long "ā" sound: "a," as in *fate*; "ae," as in *Maelstrom* (pronounced: MAIL-strum); "ai," as in *bait*; "ao," as in *gaol* (pronounced: jail); "au," as in *gauge*; "ay," as in *day*; "aye," as in *aye*; "e" and "ee" as in *melee* (pronounced: may-LAY); "ea," as in *break*; "eh," as in *eh* (pronounced: ay); "ey," as in *prey*; and "ue," as in *bouquet*.

The other vowels are subject to almost as many variations:

In the word *whoa*, the "a" is silent. Why, then, doesn't *w-h-o* also spell *whoa*? English is rich in such fantastic groups of words as: *right, rite, write, wright; bomb, comb, tomb; four, hour, tour; sew, few; host, lost; couch, touch.*

What does *b-o-w* spell? It is impossible to say until we select one of the various meanings of the word. *O-n-e* is pronounced "wun"; but *o-n-l-y*, another form of the same word, is pronounced "oan-lee." How can *b-u-s-i* spell "biz," as in *business*? Does *r-o-u-g-h* spell "ruff"? No more than *g-r-a-p-h* spells "graff." If "gh" stands for "f," what does it mean in *slight, weight, sought, dough*? Does *w-o-m-e-n* spell "wimmen"? Does *y-a-c-h-t* spell "yaht"? Does *c-o-l-o-n-e-l* spell "KER-nel"? If *h-o-e* spells *hoe*, why doesn't *s-h-o-e* spell *show*?

If the letter "o" means the sound "oh," why is it used in

such words as *dog, wolf, odd, tongue, do, women?* If *o-u-t* spells *out*, why doesn't "ou" have the same value in *cough, rough, poultry, would, group, journey, touch?*

Here is why foreign students of English jump into rivers:

bough rhymes with *cow*
cough rhymes with *off*
dough rhymes with *foe*
through rhymes with *too*
hough rhymes with *lock*
rough rhymes with *cuff*
hiccough rhymes with *pick up*

Now we are beginning to see that English as it is spoken and English as it is written (spelled) are as unlike as are dog Latin and Esperanto. By no distortion of the imagination can it be maintained that English is a phonetic language.

Well, then, why do we not all get together and put an end to such outlandish jabberwocky as this English system of spelling? Spelling reform has occupied the thoughts of scholars for centuries. Innumerable movements to bring about simplified spelling have sprung up and died; they have had little effect on the English system of orthography. And such movements must always fail. Let me tell you why:

If we were to adopt a phonetic system of spelling—that is to say, a system of spelling *sounds*—we should need at least twenty new letters in the alphabet. The introduction of these new symbols would make almost every English word as unintelligible as the hieroglyphics of the ancient Mayans. Every mother's son and daughter of us would have to learn to read, write, and spell all over again.

Not only that—and a horrid thought it is!—but unless the present *system* of spelling also were taught in our schools, within one generation every book that has been printed in English during the past three hundred years would become meaningless to all but scholars.

We should have to reprint the entire library of English literature and all English translations of foreign writings. We should have to reissue the untold millions of school, law, and medical books, reprint the dictionaries, the encyclopedias,

the Congressional Record, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bible itself.

The correspondence files of every business house in the land, and all Government records since the Declaration of Independence, would in time become so much waste paper.

We should have to sell for scrap iron all the existing typewriters and multigraphs, restock printing establishments with new fonts of type, and buy new linotype machines for every newspaper, magazine, and book-publishing house in America.

I am afraid all this would cost a pretty penny. There isn't enough gold interred in the underground vaults of Fort Knox to make the first payment.

So, let us worry about more practical things.

That we of the United States speak the American language has been recognized since colonial days. The language of the British (now almost completely static, except for the introduction of occasional Americanisms) is spoken natively by only sixty-two million persons. The American language, lusty, dynamic, growing, is spoken by more than three times that number.

There are such wide differences in the two streams of English that a great number of words, phrases, and usages in the British speech are quite baffling to us, and vice versa.

The word *tramcar*, a Briticism for *streetcar*, is seldom if ever used by natives of the United States. *Braces* in England are *suspenders* in America. The Britisher ascends in a *lift*; the American takes an *elevator*. The English housewife shops for odds and ends at the *bazaar*; the American housewife goes to the *five-and-ten*. The Englishman's half-hose are moored by *sock-suspenders*; the American's socks are anchored by *garters*—if, indeed, he wears them at all.

In England, one purchases *screw-spanners* at the *iron-mongery*; in America, *monkey wrenches* are bought at the *hardware store*. *John Bull* sweetens his *pancakes* with *treacle* from a *jug*; *Uncle Sam* douses his *stack o' wheats* with *sirup* or *molasses* from a *pitcher*.

The Briton takes a *bathe* (sic) in water heated by a *geyser*;

the American gets the water for his *bath* from a *water heater*, usually referred to redundantly as a "hot-water heater."

The English attend the *cinema*; Americans go to the *movies*. In England, one summons a *bobby*; in the United States one calls a *cop*. In England, one drives on the *left* side of the road, and cars are equipped with *right-hand* drives. In the British Army, *lieutenant* is pronounced "leftenant."

The English *public school* is not public at all, but a highly exclusive private school attended by sons of the upper class. The British pronounce *laboratory* "la-BORE-a-tree" and *schedule* "SHED-yool." The *radio* is known as the *wireless*.

To the English, *tea* is a light meal at which tea may or may not be served.

The American has his *shoes shined*; the Englishman's *boots* are *blacked*. In the United States, a billion is a thousand million; in England, a billion is a *million* million, and is written thus: 1,000,000,000,000!

The flat-brimmed straw hat, known in America as the *sailor*, is a *boater* in Great Britain; and students of Harrow, famous English school for boys, wear straw boaters the year around, even with overcoats in the winter.

American babies are fascinated by the *choo-choo*; in England, the dear little nippers beg for a ride on the *puff-puff*!

Space will not permit a complete history of the two streams of English, but these high lights will be sufficient for the purpose of this thesis:

The original language of the primitive British was Celtic, which survives today in the language of Wales, and in the speech of Western Ireland and the Scottish Highlands.

During the Roman occupation (50 B. C. to about 400 A. D.), Latin became the official language of the British Isles. Anglo-Saxon was not established until the barbaric tribes of western Europe invaded and occupied Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries. Then came the Danes, who, in 1016, installed a Dane upon the English throne. They were followed by the Normans (French-speaking Norsemen), who, in 1066, placed a Norman duke, William the Conqueror, upon the selfsame throne, and who established French as the official language

of the realm. The French influence came to an end early in the thirteenth century, but not until four hundred years later did modern English begin to evolve in Britain.

At about this time, the people of the American colonies began to acquire a new vocabulary, partly invented, and partly borrowed from the Indians and from the Dutch and other settlers of the new world. For the colonies, mind you, were not peopled by the British alone, but by the British plus myriads of Dutch, Swedish, French, Spanish, German, Scotch, and Irish homeseekers; and each race contributed copiously to the blood stream and to the language of America.

From the very first, the heavens resounded with the screams of outraged English dons who decried every Americanism in colonial speech as vile, vulgar, poisonous! Nevertheless, the new language thrived and grew astonishingly.

The greatest growth of the American language began with the incoming tide of immigration that, starting in 1860, flooded the states with millions of non-English-speaking peoples of virtually every foreign land. The first American Census was taken in 1790; the total population recorded was 3,929,881. The 1940 Census records a number almost forty times greater.

The first American dictionary, Noah Webster's, contained a scant 70,000 words. The modern unabridged *Webster's* has expanded to more than 600,000 words, in order to record the language of America. This is 200,000 more entries than are contained in the monumental *Oxford*, the great English lexicon.

The American vernacular—that is, the recognized standard speech—is as truly a composite of all languages as the blood that flows so vitally in America's veins is a composite blood. For, mark you well, America is not an Anglo-Saxon nation. The United States and Britain are thinly bound by ties of blood. In the American melting pot there are millions of foreign born, few of whom are of English birth. In his Message to Congress, February 27, 1928, President Coolidge gave these figures as the *Estimated Population in the United States in 1920, by Country of Origin*:

Great Britain and Northern Ireland.....	39,200,000
Germany	14,800,000
Irish Free State	10,400,000
Scandinavian countries	4,500,000
France	2,000,000
Netherlands	1,800,000
Czechoslovakia	1,600,000
Other western and northern European countries	3,000,000
Russia	2,100,000
Poland	3,600,000
Italy	3,600,000
Other southern and eastern European countries	2,500,000
All other white population	5,700,000
	<hr/>
Negro	94,800,000
Indian	9,500,000
Asiatic	200,000
	<hr/>
Total	105,700,000

If this seems to imply that America is a motley nation, let us find comfort in the knowledge that the British themselves are a conglomerate of Welsh, Scotch, Irish, and English, and that the latter is a race composed chiefly of descendants of the numerous invaders of the British Isles from the time of the Roman occupation down through the Norman conquest.

If there were no American language, there would be no American dictionaries and grammars. And if there had been no American language, what, pray, could have old Noah Webster been thinking of when, in 1828, after years of labor, he published in two volumes *The American Dictionary*? Oh, indeed, there is an American language. And it is, or at least it was at the time when this was written, reported to be in a state of vigorous health.

In the vocabulary that follows, we meet on a common ground of a mutual desire for speech improvement. In the

writing of this book, I have striven to avoid the pedantic cobwebs that have marred so many similar works. This book tests my staunch belief that learning can be an enjoyable pastime, instead of a dull and irksome task.

It is earnestly recommended that the reader devote a little time to the study of the phonetic system before he reads the vocabulary. The phonetic system is simple enough for a child to understand, but it *should be understood* if this book is to serve the purpose for which it was written—namely, to be a friendly, sympathetic, and ever-entertaining guide in pointing out and eliminating the errors in pronunciation that occur in American speech.

III

THE COLBY PHONETIC SYSTEM

RICHARD GRANT WHITE, noted philologist of the nineteenth century, observed that it is all but impossible for one person to convey to another, by marks or symbols, the exact sound of any word. But for centuries lexicographers have sought, by diverse and sometimes eccentric methods, to capture, freeze, and preserve in print the fine distinctions of vocal utterance.

Although most American dictionaries of the English language use diacritical symbols based either on *Webster's* or on those of the International Phonetic Association, it is apparent that, except among serious students of speech, little headway has been made in popularizing these systems, for, truly, there are few among us who can go to the dictionary and accurately determine pronunciation from the dots, dashes, ticks, strokes, and curlicues that are used to represent the sounds of speech.

This book presents for the first time, so far as my knowledge goes, a comprehensive system of indicating sounds *solely by phonetic spelling*. But it is not intended that the method used in this book be thought of as one that is to supplant the diacritical systems of the approved dictionaries. No; I prefer to offer the Colby Phonetic System as an easy means of *interpreting* dictionary pronunciations for the reader (and his name is legion): (1) who finds diacritical marks confusing, (2) who is unable to make them out because of poor vision, (3) who has not had the opportunity to become familiar with them, and (4) who neither owns nor has access to a modern pronouncing dictionary.

The Colby Phonetic System, said to be one of the easiest to understand of the systems yet devised, evolved by trial and error over a period of several years, during which time it was tested and approved by readers of most of the important daily newspapers of America and by large numbers of teachers in public school systems, colleges, private speech classes, and business schools.

The key to the Colby Phonetic System is found in this simple device: *the sounds that are heard in the syllables of each word are spelled as they occur in certain other words that are most familiar to us.*

To illustrate, let us arrive at the pronunciation of the word *kilometer*. These are a few of the dictionary listings:

<i>Webster's New International</i>	}	<i>kīl'ō-mē'tēr</i>
<i>Macmillan's Modern Dictionary</i>		
<i>Winston Simplified Dictionary</i>		
<i>Funk and Wagnalls' New Standard</i>		<i>kil'-o-mī'tər</i>
<i>The New Century</i>		<i>kil'ō-mē-tēr</i>
<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>		<i>ki-lōmītər</i>
<i>Jones Pronouncing Dictionary</i>		<i>'kilo.mi:tə</i>

The hardy souls among us, grappling with these cryptographs and at last deciphering them, find the dictionaries more or less in agreement, thus:

The first syllable is exactly like the word	kill
The second syllable is like the interjection	oh
The third syllable has the long "e" as in <i>bee</i> :	mee
The fourth syllable is simply <i>ter</i> as in <i>meter</i> :	ter

The *kill* syllable receives the main accent; the *mee* syllable receives the secondary accent. Let us use capital letters to indicate the accents and string our phonetic syllables to-

gether, and the correct pronunciation is instantly apparent to anyone who can read English:

KILL'-oh-MEE-ter

Note: The widely heard pronunciation that accents the second syllable, as "kill-AH-mit-er," has no dictionary sanction. See KILOMETER, page 157.

THE VOWELS

<i>Webster's Symbols</i>	<i>Colby's Phonetic Spelling</i>	
ā as in <i>bay, bait, data, mayhem, strata, baby, maelstrom, heinous</i>	ay or ai	Whichever has the more familiar look, as: bay, bait, DAY-tuh, MAY-hem, STRAY-tuh, BAY-bee, MAIL-strum, HAY-nuss.
ǎ as in <i>mat, advance, arrogant, mantle</i>	a always	as: mat, ad-VANSS, AR-oh-g'nt, MAN-t'l.
âr as in <i>air, care, declare, affair, prayer</i>	air	When "â" is followed by "r," it rhymes approximately with <i>air, hair, pair</i> , as: air, kair, dee-KLAIR, uh-FAIR, prair.
à as in <i>ask, dance, grasp</i>	a always	The dictionary character "à" describes a vowel sound that may be the "ǎ" of <i>man</i> , or a medial sound about halfway between the "ǎ" of <i>man</i> and the "ā" of <i>father</i> , or the "ā" sound itself. It is a purposely ambiguous symbol, and it does not, as many mistakenly believe, indicate an invariably broad "a." Since the so-called broad "a" is native to but a few

Webster's Symbols	Colby's Phonetic Spelling	
		localities in the United States, and is looked upon elsewhere as an affectation, this book does not show it in the <i>ask-dance-grasp</i> group of words. Such words are shown here with the "ă" of <i>man</i> . But the reader may properly supply the "ă" sound that is in best usage in his community. For a discussion of the broad and medial "a," see ASK, page 50.
ă as in <i>father, arm, car, palm, hearth</i>	ah always	as: FAH-ther, ahrm, kahr, pahm, hahrth.
ē as in <i>bet, meadow, feather, fester</i>	e always	as: bet, MED-oh, FETH-er, FESS-ter.
ēr as in <i>errand, error, experiment, merry</i>	air	When "ē" is followed by "r," it rhymes approximately with <i>air, hair, pair</i> , as: AIR-und, AIR-er, eks-PAIR-uh-ment, MAIR-ee.
ēr as in <i>maker, preacher, perform</i>	er always	When "ē" is followed by "r," it rhymes with <i>her, per</i> , as: MAY-ker, PREE-cher, per-FAWRM.
ē as in <i>meet, beat, Phoebe, either, machine, elite</i>	ee always	as: meet, beet, FEE-bee, EE-ther, muh-SHEEN, ay-LEET.
ī as in <i>bit, fitted, philosophy, million, infinity, window</i>	i always	as: bit, FIT-ted, fill-AH-soe-fee, MILL-yun, in-FIN-uh-tee, WIN-doe.

Webster's Symbols	Colby's Phonetic Spelling	
ir as in <i>irrigate, mirror, syrup, tyranny, miracle</i>	ear	When "i" is followed by "r," it rhymes approximately with <i>ear, fear, hear</i> , as: EAR -uh-gait, MEAR -er, SEAR -up, TEAR -uh-nee, MEAR -uh-k'l.
i as in <i>idea, mighty, piety, identity</i>	eye or y	<p>Whichever has the more familiar look, as: eye-DEE-uh, MY-tee, PY-uh-tee, eye-DEN-tuh-tee.</p> <p>When "i" is followed by a consonant in the same syllable, the customary English spelling is used, thus:</p> <p><i>ibe</i> as in <i>bribe</i> <i>ice</i> as in <i>dice</i> <i>ide</i> as in <i>hide</i> <i>ife</i> as in <i>life</i> <i>ike</i> as in <i>like</i> <i>ile</i> as in <i>file</i> <i>ime</i> as in <i>dime</i> <i>ine</i> as in <i>dine</i> <i>ipe</i> as in <i>pipe</i> <i>ire</i> as in <i>fire</i> <i>ite</i> as in <i>bite</i> <i>ithe</i> as in <i>lithe</i> <i>ive</i> as in <i>dive</i> <i>ize</i> as in <i>size</i></p>
o as in <i>odd, robber, operate, foreign, document, mob</i>	ah always	<p>as: ahd, RAH-ber, AH-per-ait, FAHR-en, DAHK-yoo-ment, mahb.</p> <p>Some readers may not agree that the phonetic spelling "ah" correctly represents "o" as in <i>odd</i>, <i>op</i>-</p>

Webster's
Symbols

Colby's
Phonetic
Spelling

erate, document, etc., preferring a more rounded vowel that is closer to the "aw" sound as in *soft*, *often*. But "ah" for "ö" is in accordance with the best dictionary opinion.

In the pronouncing section of *Webster's New International*, Second Edition, page xl, paragraph 81, we read: "In the larger part of America and Canada the ä ("ah") sound is used in words spelled with o, as *top*, *block*, *pond*, *doll*, etc., and in words like *what*, *watch*, *want*, *wasp*, etc., with w before a."

Again, on page xlvi, paragraph 184: "The rounded o is not in general use in America. It is used by a considerable part of the inhabitants of Eastern New England, by many in New York City, and to a considerable extent in the South. It is also used sporadically in occasional words, but not as a stable speech sound in the country as a whole." . . . "In the prevailing speech of the whole country, words containing 'short o' are

Webster's Symbols	Colby's Phonetic Spelling	
		pronounced with an entirely <i>unrounded vowel identical with the ä in father</i> and of varying length." (The italics are mine.)
ô as in <i>soft, order, lawyer, offer</i>	aw always	as: sawft, AWR-der, LAW- yer, AW-fer.
ō as in <i>open, token, obese, motion</i>	oh or oe	<p>Whichever has the more familiar look, as: OH-pen, TOE-ken, oh-BEES, MOE-shun.</p> <p>When "ō" is followed by a consonant in the same syllable, the customary English spelling is used, thus:</p> <p>obe as in robe ode as in code oaf as in loaf oke as in joke ole as in hole ome as in home one as in bone ope as in hope ore as in more ote as in note ove as in rove oze as in froze</p>
oi as in <i>toil, coy, de- ploy, hoyden</i>	oi or oy	Whichever has the more familiar look, as: toil, koy, dee-PLOY, HOY-den.

<i>Webster's Symbols</i>	<i>Colby's Phonetic Spelling</i>	
ou as in <i>about, cow, vowel, mouth, couch, louder</i>	ou or ow	Whichever has the more familiar look, as: uh-BOUT , kow , VOW-el , mouth , kouch , LOUD-er .
oo as in <i>bamboo, food, blue, crew, shoe, coupé, coupon</i>	oo always	as: bam-BOO , food , bloo , kroo , shoo , koo-PAY , KOO-pahn .
öo as in <i>foot, book, Stuka, Luftwaffe, pudding</i>	öö always	as: fööot , böök , SHTÖÖ-kah , LÖÖFT-vah-fuh , PÖÖD-ing .
ü as in <i>butter, usher, upper, nation</i>	u always	as: BUT-ter , USH-er , UP-per , NAY-shun .
ū as in <i>union, avenue, music, humor, duke, puny, assume</i>	yoo or ew	Whichever has the more familiar look, as: YOON-yun , AV-ee-nyoo , HEW-mer , dyook , PEW-nee , uh-SYOOM .
ü as in the French <i>rue, tu, vu</i>	ü always	as: rü , tü , vü .
ü as in the German <i>über, Führer</i>	ü always	as: Ü-ber , FÜ-rer .
ür as in <i>burr, fur, bird, myrrh, mirth</i>	er always	When "ü" is followed by "r," it rhymes exactly with <i>her, per</i> , as: ber , fer , berd , mer , merth .
üv as in <i>love, glove, shovel</i>	uv always	as: luv , gluv , SHUV-v'l .

1. Although the dictionaries indicate that the "i" in such words as *anti, semi, multi*, and the "y" in such words as *beauty, baby, silly*, have the "i" sound as in *bit*, it is generally admitted that the prevailing tendency in cultured usage is

toward the long "ē" sound, as: **AN-tee**, **SEM-ee**, **MULL-tee**, **BEW-tee**, **BAY-bee**, **SILL-ee**, and the vowels are so shown in this book. But the reader may properly use the "ī" sound if he prefers.

2. The obscured or neutral vowel sound in unaccented syllables, represented by the IPA symbol ə, and by *Webster's* italic vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, is heard in the "a" of *sofa*, the "e" of *traveling*, the second "i" of *incidental*, the "o" of *connect*, and the "u" of *circus*. As the sound of obscured *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* is approximately the "u" as in *funny*, *but*, *mud*, it is represented in this book as either "u" or "uh," thus:

sofa: **SOE-fuh**
traveling: **TRAV-uh-ling**
incidental: **IN-suh-DEN'-t'l**
connect: **kuh-NEKT**
circus: **SER-kuss**

In many words, the vowel sound seems to disappear altogether, in which case the missing vowel is indicated by an apostrophe, as:

mortal: **MAWR-t'l**
final: **FY-n'l**
competent: **KAHM-pee-t'nt**

Best authority holds that the neutral vowel sound (ə) widely prevails in the standard cultured speech of America. This book, in showing the neutral vowel sound "uh" in unaccented syllables, does so only when it is in accord with the preponderance of dictionary opinion. But be sure that you do not confuse the phonetic spelling "uh" with the grunt-like exclamation *ugh*!

THE CONSONANTS

- g** is used only for the hard sound, as in *go*, *get*, *give*
- j** is used for "j" as in *jet*, *judge*, and for the soft "g" as in *gem*, *gentle*, *germ*, as: **jem**, **JEN-t'l**, **jerm**.
- k** is used for "k" and for the hard "c" as in *cat*, *catch*, *capture*, as: **kat**, **katch**, **KAP-cher**.
- ch** is used for "ch" as in *chin*, *charm*, *chop*.

nw is used for "wh" as in *where, when, what*, as: **hwair, hwen, hwaht**.

ks is used for "x" as in *fix, box, ax*, as: **fiks, bahks, aks**.

kw is used for "qu" as in *quick, queen, quite*, as: **kwik, kween, kwite**.

sh is used for "sh" as in *shoot, shine, shod*, as: **shoot, shine, shahd**; and for the "sh" sound in *-tion*, as in *nation, motion, faction*, as: **NAY-shun, MOE-shun, FAK-shun**.

zh is used for the sound of "zh" as in *azure, pleasure, leisure*, as: **AZH-er, PLEZH-er, LEE-zher**.

tch is used as in *ditch, switch, pitch*.

c is seldom used.

q and **x** are not used.

The other consonants, "b," "d," "f," "h," "k," "l," "m," "n," "p," "r," "s," "t," "v," "w," "y," and "z," take their regular English values.

The German fricative "ch" as in *ach, dich, ich*, is indicated by "ch" in parentheses, as: **ry(ch)** for *Reich*, **ah(ch)** for *ach*.

The French nasal "n," which has no equivalent in English, as heard in *bon, enfant, lingerie*, is indicated by "n" in parentheses, as: **baw(n), ah(n)-FAH(N), la(n)zh-REE**.

Capital letters indicate the syllables to be accented. The primary or main accent is indicated by an accent mark, thus: *dictionary* is pronounced: **DIK'-shun-AIR-ee**.

IV

VOCABULARY A TO Z

A glossary of words most frequently mispronounced. Correct pronunciations clearly and accurately presented by the Colby System of phonetic spelling.

ABDOMEN, NOUN. *The front of the body between the thorax and the pelvis; the belly.*

The pronunciation in best usage, and the first choice of most dictionaries, accents the second syllable, which rhymes with *toe*. The first-syllable accent also has dictionary support. At least two now list it as first choice.

First choice: ab-DOE-men

Second choice: AB-doe-m'n

Incidentally, the word *belly* is neither immoral nor vulgar. It is simply the modern form of the Old English *bely*, which meant nothing more wicked than "bag," "bellows."

The taboo against *belly* was imposed by the same prudish souls of the nineteenth century who substituted *limb* for *leg*, *nether garments* for *trousers*, *white meat* for the *breast of chicken*, *unmentionables* for *underwear*, and resorted to other equally ridiculous euphemisms. So chaste were the minds of that era, we are told, that the faintest whisper of the horrid word *shirt* in the presence of a woman was a grave insult.

BELLY

"One mustn't say the horrid word,"
Says prudish Mistress Grundy;
"It is profane whene'er 'tis heard,
On weekdays or on Sunday.

"The ear that is attuned to verse
Of Hawthorne, Keats, or Shelley,
Is shocked to hear, as if a curse,
The word that rhymes with jelly!"

ABSORB, VERB. *To suck up; to occupy fully.*

There is no dictionary support for the frequently heard "z" sound in *absorb* and its derivatives, as "ab-ZAWRB," "ab-ZAWRB-ing," "ab-ZAWRB-ent," although the mispronunciations are not unusual among the educated. Recently, throughout a network radio address, the president of a large Eastern university used the "z" sound in the second syllable. He also erroneously used the "z" sound in the word *resourceful*.

Why *absorb* should be given this unorthodox twist is unknown. It is simply one of those idiosyncrasies of English pronunciation for which there is no explanation other than "it just is."

Correct pronunciation:

ab-SAWRB

ACCESSORIES, NOUN. *Articles that add to the effectiveness of something else.*

It is surprising how many persons, women especially, give to this word the unorthodox pronunciation "uh-SESS-uh-reez." No dictionary, to my knowledge, sanctions the "s" sound for the "c" in the first syllable.

The first "c" should have the hard sound of "k," as in *accent, accept, access*; never the "s" sound of *assent, assess, assign*.

There is but one permissible pronunciation; it is:

ak-SESS-oh-reez

ACCLIMATE, VERB. *To become accustomed to a new climate or to new surroundings.*

Two pronunciations have the approval of the dictionaries. In the first choice, accent the second syllable, which rhymes with *fly*. In the second choice, the accent shifts to the first syllable:

First choice: uh-KLY-mit

Second choice: AK-luh-mait

ACCURATE, ADJECTIVE. *Precise; exact; true to the facts.*

The “u” in the second syllable should not be obscured, as “AK-uh-rit.” Give the “u” the long sound, as in *Cupid*. Say:
AK-yoo-rit

ACROSS

ONCE

WISH

You are wondering why three such unrelated words as *across*, *once*, and *wish* have been grouped together. What can they have in common, you are asking.

The answer is simply this: In the average vocabulary, these three words are found wagging their “t’s” behind them, as: “Oncet and for all, I wisht you’d stop going acrosst the street!”

It is impossible to explain whence comes the excrescent “t” in these words and why *attack* is pronounced “attakt” by most speakers. But the “t” is there for all to hear and marvel at.

Across, *once*, and *wish* should be bobtailed at *once* if you *wish* your speech to get *across*.

Correct pronunciations:

across: uh-KRAWSS

once: wunss

wish: wish

ADDRESS

NOUN. *A speech; the written directions on an envelope.*

VERB. *To speak to; to address a letter.*

Question: Is the place where I get my mail my “AD-dress”?

Answer: It was formerly held that “AD-dress” was incorrect. However, the newer dictionaries sanction “AD-dress” for the noun, but not for the verb.

First choice, noun and verb: ad-DRESS

Second choice, noun only: AD-dress

ADMIT, VERB. *To allow entrance.*

Do not say “ADD-mit.” This word should never be accented on the first syllable.

It is worthy of note that teachers in certain sections of the

country tolerate, if not actually encourage, the erroneous use of *admit* as a noun, as “an ‘ADD-mit’ to class.”

Research fails to disclose sanction for this, even as a colloquialism, by any recognized authority. *Admit*, as a noun, simply does not exist, except as a dialectical “trade” expression in the lingo of teachers and students. It obviously results from false analogy with the noun *permit* (PER-mit), which is the correct word to use, as: “This *permit* will *admit* you to class.”

Note: Do not say “the price of admittance.” The correct word is *admission*, though we should keep in mind that the expression “the price of admission” is redundant, since one of the meanings of *admission* is “the price of entrance,” or “fee paid for entering.” Eliminate “the price of” and say instead: “The *admission* is one dollar.”

Use *admit* only as a verb and accent the second syllable:
add-MIT

ADOBE, NOUN. *Sun-dried clay.*

Adobe is widely employed in building in Mexico and the states of the Southwest. Adobe consists of clay mixed with chopped straw or other similar binders. It is generally made into large bricks.

The word is from the Spanish *adobar*, “to plaster.”

First choice: uh-DOE-bee

Second choice (Spanish): ah-DOE-bay

ADONIS. *A beautiful youth in Greek mythology; any extremely handsome young man.*

It will be a distinct surprise to many readers that the commonly heard “uh-DAH-N-iss,” the second syllable pronounced as in *Donald*, is not listed by many standard dictionaries.

In mythology, *Adonis*, a youth of great beauty, was loved by Aphrodite (AF-roë-DY'-tee), the goddess of love. The mother of Adonis was the beautiful Princess Smyrna, who, before the birth of her son, was changed by the gods into a tree, from which Adonis came forth (a real chip off the old block). In his early youth, Adonis was killed by a boar.

In best usage, the second syllable rhymes with *toe*:

uh-DOE-niss

ADVERTISEMENT, NOUN. *A public notice; that which advertises.*

There is a good deal of uncertainty about the pronunciation of the word *advertisement*. Scores of readers have asked: "Should one say 'AD-ver-TIZE'-ment' or 'ad-VER-tiss-ment'?" Even in advertising circles and in the business offices of newspapers much confusion exists.

So, let us seek counsel where the best counsel about words is to be found—in the reputable dictionaries.

Dictionary opinion is somewhat divided. Some list "ad-VER-tiss-ment" as first or only choice. Others give preference to "AD-ver-TIZE'-ment," holding that it prevails in American usage.

It is natural to think that the word *advertise* is a product of this modern age of high-powered advertising. But that is not so. The word, in fact, is ancient. It springs from the Latin *advertere*, "to turn the mind to," and is found in the Bible in Numbers xxiv: 14: "I will *advertise* thee what this people shall do."

So far, one pronunciation is as good as the other:

Either: ad-VER-tiss-ment

Or: AD-ver-TIZE'-ment

AERIAL

NOUN. *A radio antenna.*

ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to the air.*

In Standard American speech the word *aerial* has three syllables only. In British English *aerial* is given four syllables, with the second accented.

U.S.: AIR-ee-ul

British: ay-EAR-ee-ul

AGAIN, ADVERB. *Another; once more.*

Do not say "uh-GIN" or "uh-GAN."

Some speakers prefer to rhyme the second syllable with *pain*, *rain*, as: "uh-GAYN," but, American dictionaries tell us, use of the long "a" (ay) in *again* and *against* is a Britishism.

That the rhyme with *pain* has long been customary in England is shown by Old Father William's answer to his son's

query as to why the old man incessantly stood on his head (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*):

"In my youth," Father William
replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure
the brain;
But, now that I'm per-
fectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

The British form has been noted in the speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, with few exceptions, conforms strictly to standard American usage.

The pronunciations recommended by American dictionaries, and in most cases the only pronunciations given, rhyme the second syllable with *men*, *hen*, *pen*:

again: uh-GEN
against: uh-GENST

AGILE, ADJECTIVE. *Nimble; active mentally or physically.*
Never say "AY-jile."

The first syllable must rhyme with *badge*. The second syllable, in American usage, rhymes with *fill*.

U.S.: ADGE-ill
British: ADGE-ile

(See FRAGILE, page 124.)

AGRICULTURIST, NOUN. *One who practices agriculture.*

Writers and speakers, beware! Do not form this word by adding *-ist* to *agricultural*. There is no *-al-* in *agriculturist* or in *horticulturist*.

Correct pronunciations:

agriculturist: AG-ree-KULL'-cher-ist
horticulturist: HAWR-tee-KULL'-cher-ist

AIRPLANE, NOUN. *An aircraft heavier than air.*

There is no such word as "airplane." This is a corruption of the British *aeroplane*, pronounced "AY'er-oh-PLAIN."

The United States Army, Navy, and Bureau of Standards

officially adopted the form *airplane* during the First World War.

Correct pronunciation:

AIR-plain

ALIAS

HEINOUS

FELONIOUS

These words are the Unholy Three of the average vocabulary. Even among speakers of the highest education, the following mispronunciations are frequently noted: "uh-LY-uss," "HEE-nee-uss," "FELL-uh-nuss."

Alias should be accented on the first syllable. The "a" is long, as in *day*:

AY-lee-us

Heinous has but two syllables; accent the first, which has the exact sound of the word *hay*:

HAY-nuss

Felonious has four syllables. The accent falls on the second:

fell-OH-nee-uss

ALLERGY

ALLERGIC

Question: Will you please pronounce *allergy* and *allergic* for us?

Answer: *Allergy* is accented on the first syllable, which rhymes with *pal*:

AL-er-jee

Accent *allergic* on the second syllable, which rhymes with *per*:

uh-LER-jik

Question: Is it correct to say: "I am allergic to blondes"?

Answer: Hardly. *Allergy* is hypersensitiveness to pollens or other substances. It causes an extreme irritation in the respiratory tract, as in hay fever. Blondes have been known to affect men strangely, but, provocative and overpowering as the fair creatures undeniably are, I doubt if a blonde ever caused a true allergic condition.

Use *allergic* and *allergy* only in the medical sense. It is better to say: "I have an aversion to (or a weakness for) blondes," as the case may be.

ALLY

VERB. *To join by an alliance.*

NOUN. *One united by treaty or league.*

Do not rhyme *ally* with *alley* or with *shall I*.

The "a" in *ally* and *allies* has the obscure sound as in *sofa*, *alike*, *about*, *alive*; not the flat "a" of *alley*, *Sally*, *pal*, *gallon*. See a discussion of the obscure "a" under LILAC, page 162. The accent falls on the second syllable:

ally: uh-LY
allies: uh-LIZE

ALMA MATER, LATIN. *Foster mother; one's college or school.*

Do not say: "AL-muh MAT-ter."

Familiar phrases and quotations from the Latin generally are pronounced: (a) according to the rules of English pronunciation, and (b) according to the so-called "Continental" method, which gives vowels and consonants the Italian values.

The first pronunciation listed below is considered by most authorities to be the better choice :

First choice: AL-muh MAY-ter
Second choice: AHL-muh MAH-ter

ALTERNATE

This word has several pronunciations, depending on how it is used in the sentence.

As a verb ("We shall *alternate* between the two"), accent the first syllable and rhyme the last syllable with *bait*, *wait*:

First choice: AWL-ter-nait
Second choice: AL-ter-nait

As an adjective ("This is our *alternate* proposal"), there are four permissible pronunciations:

First choice: AWL-ter-nit
Second choice: AL-ter-nit
Third choice: awl-TER-nit
Fourth choice: al-TER-nit

As a noun ("I shall attend the convention as an *alternate*"), the word should never be accented on the second syllable. The correct pronunciations are:

First choice: AWL-ter-nit
Second choice: AL-ter-nit

ALTIMETER, NOUN. *An instrument for measuring altitude.*

"AL'-tuh-MEE-ter" is the pronunciation most often heard among aviators, but at the time this was written it had no dictionary support.

Accent the second syllable, which rhymes with *him*:
al-TIM-ee-ter

ALUMNUS, NOUN. *A graduate of a school, especially of a college.*

Question: Will you please give the masculine, feminine, singular, and plural forms of *alumnus*?

Answer:

Masculine singular, *alumnus*: pronounced uh-LUM-nuss

Masculine plural, *alumni*: pronounced uh-LUM-ny

Feminine singular, *alumna*: pronounced uh-LUM-nuh

Feminine plural, *alumnae*: pronounced uh-LUM-nee

AMATEUR, NOUN. *One who is not rated as a professional.*

This indispensable French word has no English equivalent; nor does it seem to have a standard English pronunciation.

Until the advent of the radio "amateur hour," with Major Bowes as its patron saint, the word was almost universally pronounced "AM-uh-cher," particularly in show business, in broadcasting, and in sports circles.

Now, on the radio especially, the "-cher" has changed to "-ter," in imitation of the French pronunciation; but the accent still remains on the first syllable, as "AM-uh-ter."

However, a careful inspection of the *Webster, Oxford, Century, Funk and Wagnalls, Hempl, Winston and Macmillan* dictionaries does not sustain radio's "AM-uh-ter" as the best choice. On the contrary, instead of leading the procession, "AM-uh-ter" is riding the caboose.

These are the findings:

First choice (6 out of 7): am-uh-TER

Second choice (4 out of 7): AM-uh-tyoor

Third choice (2 out of 7): AM-uh-cher

Fourth choice (1 out of 7): AM-uh-ter

AMBASSADOR, NOUN. *An official representative; an envoy.*

Radio "colyumists," commentators, newscasters, and political speakers, spare us "ambassa-dore!" Do not rhyme the last syllable with *bore*, *core*, *more*.

The Latin suffix *-or* means "an agent" or "doer." It is correctly pronounced "er" to rhyme with *her*, *per*, as any American dictionary will affirm.

The passionate striving for good "diction" betrays many speakers to commit laughable blunders, of which the pompous and erroneous "ore" sound is perhaps the most common, and surely—to my ears at least—one of the most obnoxious.

I have actually heard these howlers on the radio, not once, but numerous times: "actore," "ancestore," "bachelore," "competitore," "conductore," "chancellore," "directore," "editore," "factore," "legislature," "senatore," "tenore," "sailore," "tailore."

The grand prize goes to the woman network broadcaster who recently spoke for fifteen "elegant" minutes on the life cycle of the "alligator"!

There are hundreds of nouns ending in *-or*, of which, to my knowledge, only one—the word *metaphor*—is an exception to the "er"-sound rule. The preferred pronunciation is "MET-uh-fer"; second choice is "MET-uh-fawr," not "-fore."

Permit me to emphasize that *-or*, in all the above words and hundreds of others, rhymes with *her*, *per*:

am-BASS-uh-der

AMEN, INTERJECTION. *So be it.*

Some uncertainty exists even among churchmen as to whether the first syllable of *amen* should be "ay" or "ah."

Here is a safe rule to follow, one that has the approval of the best authorities:

In speaking, say ay-MEN.

In singing, always say ah-MEN.

AMORTIZE, VERB. *To provide for a sinking fund or for the payment of a debt.*

Until recently the dictionaries refused to recognize the widespread pronunciation "AM-er-tize."

The older dictionaries (those not recently published or revised) list “uh-MAWR-tize” as the only choice. But “AM-er-tize” has become so firmly established in financial, real-estate, and legal usage that it is now listed as first choice by the newer dictionaries, such the *The American College Dictionary* (Random House), *WORDS: The New Dictionary* (Grosset and Dunlap), *New College Standard Dictionary* (Funk and Wagnalls), and Kenyon and Knott’s *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*.

Either: AM-er-tize

Or: uh-MAWR-tize

Likewise, the word *amortization* may be pronounced:

Either: AM-er-ti-ZAY’shun

Or: uh-MAWR-ti-ZAY’shun

AMPERSAND

Question: What is the character & called, and what does it stand for?

Answer: The character & is called *ampersand*, a corruption of “and per se and” (“& by itself makes, or stands for, and”).

School children used to repeat the alphabet in unison, thus: “A per se A,” “B per se B,” and so on to &: “and per se and,” which, in the childish singsong of the recitation, was garbled “ampersand.”

The character & is an abbreviation for the Latin *et*, and stands for “and.” It is pronounced:

AM-per-sand

AMUCK, ADJECTIVE. *Having a murderous frenzy.*

The spelling of this Malay word takes three forms: *amuck*, *amok*, and *amoke*. The first is in widespread use, but some dictionaries display a preference for the second.

When a Malay is seized with this form of frenzy, his purpose is to slay or maim as many persons as he can before he himself is killed. Thus, *running amuck* is murder and suicide combined. The Malay’s usual weapon is the *creese* (also spelled *kris*; both forms rhyme with *geese*), a dagger with a long, two-edged, serpentine blade.

Correct pronunciation:

First choice, amuck: uh-MUK

Second choice, amok: uh-MAHK

Third choice, amoke: uh-MOKE

ANCHORS AWEIGH!

This article is for landlubbers only. The words that follow are commonly mispronounced by us mariners whose seafaring experience is limited to an occasional voyage in a hired rowboat. According to ancient nautical custom, many letters in most of these words are silent.

BOATSWAIN, NOUN. *A warrant officer.* The first syllable rhymes with *toe*; the vowel sound in the second syllable is practically obscured: **BOE-s'n**

COXSWAIN, NOUN. *The steersman of a boat.* The correct nautical pronunciation is: **KAHK-s'n**

DINGHY, NOUN. *A light rowboat.* The first syllable is not "dinge," to rhyme with *hinge*; it should rhyme with *swing*, *thing*: **DING-ee**

ENSIGN, NOUN. *A commissioned officer in the navy.* Do not say "EN-sine." The second syllable has the exact sound of the word *sin*: **EN-sin**

FRIGATE, NOUN. *A ship-rigged war vessel.* The first syllable is not "fridge," to rhyme with *ridge*. The word rhymes with *dig it*: **FRIG-it**

GUNWALE, NOUN. *Where the deck meets the topsides.* This word should rhyme with *funnel*: **GUN-n'l**

MAINSAIL, NOUN. *Sail, in such words as mainsail, topsail, skysail, is pronounced, not "sail," but "s'l," as in vessel:* **MAIN-s'l**

Note: Do not say: "The ship is under weigh." It is correct to say: "The ship weighs anchor and is under way."

ANCHOVY, NOUN. *A small herringlike fish.*

Most speakers wrongly accent the first syllable: "AN-chuh-vee." Place the accent on the second syllable, which rhymes with *toe*:

an-CHOE-vee

AND/OR

Question: Is there a name for the diagonal stroke in *and/or*?

Answer: This character is the *virgule*, from the Latin *virgula*, "a small rod." *Virgule* is pronounced:

VER-gyool

ANTI-**BEWARE OF "FOUR EYES"!**

Four "eyes" to be avoided in standard American speech are: "ant-eye," "dem-eye," "mult-eye," and "sem-eye," for *anti-*, *demi-*, *multi-*, and *semi-*. No authority gives the long "i" (eye) sound to these important prefixes.

Most dictionaries show the "i" in *anti-*, *demi-*, *multi-*, and *semi-* as having the short sound, as in *it*, *bit*, and *hit*. But they admit that there is a tendency to give the "i" the long "e" sound, as in *machine*, *marine*.

I have found that the long "e" sound is greatly prevalent the country over and that the pure short "i" sound is seldom heard. Moreover, to most ears, the long "e" sound is by far the more pleasing.

At any rate, if we have any regard for the correctness of our speech, we shall avoid the "four eyes" in these prefixes.

Correct pronunciations:

anti-: AN-tee (or AN-ti)
demi-: DEM-ee (or DEM-i)
multi-: MUL-tee (or MUL-ti)
semi-: SEM-ee (or SEM-i)

ANTIMACASSAR, NOUN. *A tidy, or cover, to protect the arms or back of a chair.*

Do you know why chair tidies became known by so formidable a name as *antimacassars*?

The word is a tribute to masculine vanity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The well-dressed blade of those swashbuckling days plastered his hair with various scented and viscid oils (even bear's grease), the most highly favored of which, in elegant circles, was macassar oil, believed to be an excellent "hair restorer."

Housewives of the day, in dismay at the heavy larding of

their upholstered chairs and sofas, began to fasten ornamental tidies here and there to absorb the overflow of macassar, or hair oil. Hence the name *anti-* ("opposing or preventing") *macassar* ("oil used on the hair").

Accent the first and fourth syllables:

AN-tee-muh-KASS'-er

APPLICABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Capable of being applied; suitable.*

A reader sent this clipping from an unnamed Tennessee newspaper: "No matter how many intricate and polysyllable [the writer meant "polysyllabic"] words F. D. R. uses, he almost never mispronounces one. Yet precisionists cite an instance, in a public address, of his using so simple a word as *applicable* and putting the accent—incorrectly—on the second syllable. But his is the most erudite diction since Woodrow Wilson was President."

Unless I had heard it with my own ears, I should never believe that so gross an error as "uh-PLIK-uh-b'l" ever fell from the lips of Mr. Roosevelt or any other speaker of his degree of excellence.

No, I fear that the ears of the "precisionists" (identity not disclosed) must surely have betrayed them.

The accent is on the first syllable only:

AP-lik-uh-b'l

APRON
CHILDREN
HUNDRED

Watch the second syllable of these three words. Note that the spelling is not "AY-pern," "CHILL-dern," "HUN-derd," although the words are so pronounced more often than not.

Do not get the cart before the horse. Be sure to say:

apron: AY-prun

children: CHILL-dren

hundred: HUN-dred

ARAB, NOUN. *An inhabitant of the Arabian peninsula.*

This word is commonly pronounced "AY-rab," but such usage has no dictionary support.

(Note: It is said by travelers that the fascinating, romantic Arabian sheik, as described in Edith M. Hull's novel, *The Sheik*, and portrayed on the screen by the late Rudolph Valentino, is seldom found in true life. Sheiks, it is said, are more likely to be villainous, venomous, and incredibly verminous. The title *sheik*, from the Arabic *shaykh*, means "old man." The word is pronounced "sheek," to rhyme with *meek*; or "shake," to rhyme with *make*.)

The first syllable of *Arab* is the identical "ar-" of *arrogant*, *aromatic*. In the second syllable, use the obscure "a" of *sofa*:

AR-ub

Arabic is not "uh-RAY-bik." Accent the first syllable:

AR-uh-bik

Arabian, however, does receive the accent on the second syllable:

uh-RAY-bee-un

ARBITER, NOUN. *One chosen to decide, or capable of deciding, a controversy.*

Arbiter does not rhyme with *tar biter*. The "i" must be short as in *bit*, never long as in *bite*:

AHR-bit-er

ARCHITECT, NOUN. *One who plans buildings.*

Question: I am never sure of words that begin with *arch*-. For instance, should the *arch*- in *architect* be like *march* or *mark*?

Answer: *Architect* should never be pronounced "AHR TCH-i-tek."

Several such words are stumbling blocks for the average speaker. Let us, therefore, list a few of the more familiar words that begin with the prefixes *arch*- and *archi*-, so that we may have the information for future reference.

The prefixes *arch*- and *archi*- mean "master," "chief," "great." Generally speaking, *arch*- rhymes with *march* (except in *archangel*) and *archi*- rhymes with *darky*.

These words have the "march" sound:

archbishop: **AHRTCH-BISH-up**

archdeacon: **AHRTCH-DEE-k'n**

archduke: **AHRTCH-DYOOK**
archfiend: **AHRTCH-feend**
archpriest: **AHRTCH-PREEST**

These words have the "mark" sound:

archangel: **AHRK-AIN-jel**
archives: **AHRK-ives**
archipelago: **AHRK-i-PELL'-uh-goe**
architect: **AHRK-i-tekt**

ARCTIC

NOUN and ADJECTIVE. *Relating to the North Pole or the region near it.*

ANTARCTIC, NOUN and ADJECTIVE. *Of or near the South Pole.*

"AHR-tik" and "AN-ahr-tik" are to be scrupulously avoided.

Arctic is from the Greek *arktos*, "a bear," from the northern constellation *Ursa* ("bear"). *Antarctic* means opposite to the Arctic; the South Pole and near-by regions.

Be sure to pronounce the first "c's" in these words, and do not omit the first "t" in *Antarctic*.

Correct pronunciations:

Arctic: **AHRK-tik**
Antarctic: **ant-AHRK-tik**

ARKANSAS. *A state of the United States.*

The "Wonder State," formerly called the "Bear State," was admitted to the Union in 1836.

The name *Arkansas* (from the Indian tribal name *Arkansa*) is a corruption of the Indian word *U-gakh-pa*, "the downstream people," the steps of decay being: *Ugakhpa*, *Arkanssea*, *Aconsa*, *Accanceas*, *Arkansas*.

The pronunciation "ahr-KAN-zuss" is frequently heard, and it appears as second choice in some dictionaries; but according to the Arkansas History Commission: "Arkansans are insistent, with dignity, that . . . the name of the State be not so corrupted."

In 1881, by a resolution of the General Assembly, the pronunciation of the name *Arkansas* was ordered to be:

AHR-k'n-saw

ARMISTICE, NOUN. *A temporary suspension of hostilities.*

Question: Will you please tell the public how to pronounce the precious word *armistice* and, if you can arrange it, print the correct pronunciation in large red letters? It is disgraceful that men and women who were adults at the end of the First World War, when the signing of the Armistice rocked the universe, will say “ahr-MISS-tik.”

Answer: It is a little odd that a word of such tremendous import should be retained erroneously in the speech of many intelligent and well-educated persons. However, it is doubtful whether “ahr-MISS-tik” is widespread. The prevailing mispronunciation seems to be chiefly a matter of misplacing the accent, as “ahr-MISS-tiss.”

The accent should be placed on the first syllable:

AHR-miss-tiss

Note: An *armistice* is not a guarantee of peace. This is the definition of the word from Article 36 of the Hague Peace Convention: “An armistice suspends military operations by mutual agreement between the belligerent parties. If its duration is not fixed, the belligerent parties can resume at any time.”

ARROW

ERROR

ERA

Archers, beware! The feathered shaft in your quiver is not an “AIR-uh.”

Sports announcers, beware! When a baseball player fumbles the ball, do not charge him with an “AIR-uh.”

Ministers, beware! The period of time beginning with A. D. 1 is not the Christian “AIR-uh.”

These three words not only are wholly unrelated, but have widely different pronunciations as well.

Arrow: The first syllable is the “ar” of *arrogant*; the second syllable rhymes with *toe*:

AR-roe

Error: The first syllable has the sound of the word *air*; the final “r” in *-ror* must be plainly sounded:

AIR-rer

Era: The first syllable rhymes with *fee*, *see*; the “a” in the second syllable is obscured, as in *sofa*:

EE-ruh

Memory Phrase

It is an *error* to pronounce *era* like *arrow*.

ASININE, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to the donkey or ass.*

In English, there are several adjectives ending in *-ine* (from the Greek *-inos*, “of the nature of”) that denote characteristics of animals. In all but a few, according to best usage, the “i” in *-ine* should have the long sound as in *dine*, *fine*, *mine*:

<i>Adjectives</i>	<i>Pertaining to</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
<i>Asinine</i>	donkey or ass	ASS-uh-nine
<i>Bovine</i>	ox or cow	BOE-vine
<i>Canine</i>	dog	KAY-nine
<i>Equine</i>	horse	EE-kwine
<i>Feline</i>	cat	FEE-line
<i>Leonine</i>	lion	LEE-oh-nine
<i>Porcine</i>	swine	PAWR-sine
<i>Ursine</i>	bear	ER-sine
<i>Vulturine</i>	vulture	VUL-cher-ine

The last syllable of the following words should be carefully noted:

<i>Elephantine</i> (elephant):	ELL-ee-FAN'-tin
<i>Serpentine</i> (serpent):	SER-pen-teen
<i>Viperine</i> (viper):	VY-per-in

ASK or AHSK?

Many serious students of pronunciation are perplexed about the broad (or medial) “a” (ah) in *ask*, *mask*, *task*, *dance*, *chance*, *command*, *example*, *bath*, *grass*, *chaff*, etc. “Since most radio and screen actors, and many public speakers, use the broad ‘a,’ should we use it too?” they are wondering.

Do you take a “bahth,” or is the ablution simply a “bath” at your house?

As reported by the Associated Press, a professor of spoken English at a large Eastern college declares: “It is all right to

say 'bahth' and 'cahn't' if you do it with a pleasing musical tone." As an afterthought, he adds: "But do not detract from what is being said by a mannerism that focuses attention on *how it is being said*." (The italics are mine.)

I fear that the good pundit's contradictory statement will have the effect only of increasing the uncertainty that exists in the United States as to the use of the broad "a."

To "ah" or not to "ah": that is the question that puzzles many a speaker today.

The dictionaries tell us that the so-called broad "a," which is a sound either midway between the "ä" of *fat* and the "ah" of *father*, or the "ah" sound itself, is native principally in and near Boston, Richmond, and New York City. Elsewhere in the nation, the traditionally flat "ä" of *hat* is preferred in all the so-called "ask" words.

Indeed, the dictionaries have adopted a purposely ambiguous symbol to indicate the vowel sound in such words as *ask*, *grass*, *past*, *dance*. The symbol, a single dot over the "ä," tells us that we may have our choice between the flat, the medial, or the broad sound.

"But," asks the reader, "which is the most correct?" The only answer is: The "correct" vowel sound is the one that is native to and customary in the standard speech of the locality in which you live. The *Merriam-Webster* says: ". . . the only safe guide to the pronunciation of words like *ask*, *half*, *command*, etc., is actual cultivated use."

To my mind, the broad "a" is like good breeding: neither can be assumed. But do not misunderstand me; the broad "a" is not the mark of, nor is it essential to, good breeding, as we soon shall see.

Those who *affect* the "ahsk," "dahnce," "pahst" pronunciations inevitably commit ridiculous blunders. There are comparatively few "a" words in which the broad sound is ever employed, and the uninitiated naively uses the "ah" sound with glib inaccuracy and extreme abandon whenever he encounters the vowel "a."

Here is a good example of the actual pitfalls that lie in the path of the unwary:

A woman style authority, born and reared in the Middle

West, where the broad "a" is not customary, recently broadcast over one of the networks. Throughout her talk she was meticulous in the use of the broad "a," except when she would forget it. It was "ad-VAHN-tage" one minute and plain, homespun "ad-VAN-tage" the next. Moreover, she did not use the broad sound in *bâth*, *âfter*, *bâsket*, *cân't*, *clâss*, *exâmples*, *fâst*, *sâmples*, and *vâst*. However, she did sound her broad "a" most erroneously in *plân*, *trâsh*, and *trâffîc*, as "plahn," "trahsh," and "trahffîc." The result was quite spectacular, all the more so since her natural accents were as typically Midwestern as the tall corn of her native Iowa.

Contrary to what many persons believe, the broad "a" is not an indication that one is simply sodden with culture. It is neither sacred nor ineffable. It is merely an *unimportant speech peculiarity* that is customary among a relatively small number of persons in a few isolated regions of the United States, Canada, and England. It is held in such small esteem by eighty per cent of the American population that "to go broad 'a'" is a popular synonym for snobbishness, or "wearing a high hat on a low brow." For that reason, radio and the pictures, since they play to nationwide audiences, had best avoid the broad "a," except when it is used to portray certain character parts.

But what about the average reader? The safest plan is to use the "a" sound that is in best cultured use in the section where you live. If it is natural for you to use the broad "a," and if it is accepted as correct where you live, use it by all means. But if the broad "a" has to be *acquired* and is not endemic to your part of the country, you will be playing with fire, and my sincere warning is: "Mustn't touch! Burnie, burnie!"

Note: For the sake of uniformity, and to avoid confusion, the vowel sound of all "a" words in this vocabulary will be given as the flat "ă" of *man*, *hat*, *can*. But the reader is advised to give to such words the vowel sound to which he is accustomed.

ASSUME, VERB. *To take to or upon oneself; to receive; to adopt.*

There was a time when the dictionaries held as incorrect the “ōō” sound in the so-called “long-u” words, such as assume, suit, suet, etc. We were told, “Not uh-SOOM, soot, SOO-et. Be sure to say uh-SYOOM, syoot, SYOO-et.”

Announcers and other broadcasters labored mightily to purge the “ōō” from all the “long-u” words. But the listening public began to complain about the affected speech and too-precise pronunciations heard on the air. Also, many broadcasters themselves began to rebel, saying in effect: “I simply cannot force myself to adopt pronunciations that do not prevail in good American speech, or that sound artificial.”

The tide soon turned, and the “ōō” sound began to be heard again in most of the words.

The acceptance of “ōō” was considerably hastened by the publication of three new and realistic dictionaries—Kenyon and Knott’s *Pronouncing Dictionary*, Grosset and Dunlap’s *WORDS: The New Dictionary*, and the Random House *American College Dictionary*—which not only gave complete sanction to “ōō” but in some cases listed it as the only choice. See “long-ū” words pages 248, 249, 250.

Correct pronunciation: uh-SYOOM or: uh-SOOM

Of speakers unphonetic,
Loudmouthed and energetic,
Who bellow “ath-a-let-ic,”
My view is apathetic

There is no “a” between the “th” and “l” of *athletic*, *athletics*, and *athlete*. Be sure to say:

athletic: ath-LET-ik
athletics: ath-LET-iks
athlete: ATH-leet

Careful speakers will also watch these words: *mischievous* (not “miss-CHEE-vee-uss”), *preventive* (not “pree-VEN-tuh-tiv”), *business* (not “BIZ-ee-ness”), *parliament* (not “PAHR-lee-uh-ment”), *evening* (not “EE-ven-ing”), *schedule* (not “SKEDGE-yoo-ull”).

The correct pronunciations are:

mischievous: MISS-chi-vuss
preventive: pree-VEN-tiv
business: BIZ-ness

parliament: PAHR-luh-ment
evening: EEV-ning
schedule: SKEDGE-yool or SKED-yool

ATTACHÉ, NOUN. *Member of a diplomatic staff.*

Not “uh-TACH-ee.”

The Anglicized pronunciation is almost identical with that of the French, the only difference being in the vowel sound of the second syllable. The French prefer the flat “a” of *hat*, while in America the “a” becomes obscured, as in *sofa*. Accent the third syllable:

at-uh-SHAY

AUDACIOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Daring; spirited; adventurous.*

Do not say “aw-DASH-us,” rhyming the second syllable with *sash*, *hash*.

This is one of four familiar words in which the short “a” of *hash* is erroneously used. The others are *rapacious*, *sagacious*, and *vivacious*. In *Caucasian* also, it is considered best to use the long “a” sound of *gracious*. Say:

aw-DAY-shus

Memory Phrase

GRAY-shus, what an aw-DAY-shus, vy-VAY-shus, ruh-PAY-shus, suh-GAY-shus, kaw-KAY-shun!

AUGUST, ADJECTIVE. *Majestic; magnificent; inspiring awe.*

Do not say “AW-gust” when the word is used as an adjective.

While this adjective has the same spelling and derives from the same Latin word (*augustus*, from *augere*, “to increase”) as does the name of the eighth month, the accent is placed on the second syllable, and not on the first.

Augustus, a title of honor and sacred majesty, was given to Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (27 B. C.), and it was borne by him as the first Roman emperor. The title was later adopted by other “caesars” of Rome.

How to use the word *august*: “His manner was kingly and august.”

Correct pronunciations:

Adjective: aw-GUST
Noun (month): AW-gust

AULD LANG SYNE. *A Scottish song composed by Robert Burns.*

This phrase (literally, "old long since") refers to "times long past," "the good old times."

A reader of Scottish birth writes: "Do us Scots a good turn: tell your readers how to pronounce *Auld Lang Syne* correctly."

The suggestion is a splendid one, for few Americans, even members of a certain fraternal organization who sing the song at their rituals, ever correctly pronounce the three words from Burns's immortal verse, a verse that has been called "the epitome in poetry of friendship."

Auld must never rhyme with *howled*; the word rhymes with *called*. *Lang* rhymes with *sang*. The "s" of *syne* should not be pronounced "z"; the word sounds exactly like the English *sign*.

Correct pronunciation:

awld lang **SINE**

Note: The words "in the days of auld lang syne" do not occur at any place in the poem. The correct chorus is:

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

(See EPITOME, page 112.)

AUNT, NOUN. *The sister of one's father or mother.*

The correct pronunciation of *aunt* has long been a bone of contention. Many persons argue that "ahnt" smacks of affectation, while others hold that "ant" is ridiculous and dialectical, and suggests that one's aunt is some sort of insect.

The truth is that "ant," to rhyme with *slant*, is a survival of the eighteenth century, when it was the fashion to use the flat "a" of *man* in such words as *calm*, *balm*, *far*, *car*, *haunt*, *gaunt*.

A trace of the flat "a" is still to be heard in *car*, *card*, *hard*, and similar words, in and near Boston. The pronunciations "hant" and "gant" for *haunt* and *gaunt* are not unusual today in the dialects of some sections of the United States.

In average speech, however, *aunt* is the only word of the *a-u-n-t* family (*daunt*, *flaunt*, *gaunt*, *haunt*, *taunt*, *vaunt*) that is ever heard to rhyme with *pant* and *slant*, and most American dictionaries now give preference to "ant."

First choice: ANT

Second choice: AHNT

AU REVOIR, FRENCH. *Good-by till we meet again.*

Question: Why not comment on the radio commentator who always signs off with "aw ree-VORE"?

Answer: Tossing off "aw ree-VORE" is his way of informing the listeners that he speaks French like a native . . . of Squeedunk.

Why use *au revoir* (literal meaning "to the seeing again") at all, since our own *good-by* is by far the sweeter sentiment?

Good-by is a contraction of *God be with ye*, the steps of decay being: *God be wi' ye*, *God bw' ye*, *God bwye*, *good-bye*, and *good-by*.

As actors and dramatic readers must occasionally use the French *au revoir*, they should not risk embarrassment by mispronouncing the phrase.

(Do you remember the wag of the Gibson Girl era who used to convulse his friends with the burlesque French "over the river," or, still more killingly, "Well, olive oil, folks"?)

Correct pronunciation:

oh r'VWAHR

AURORA BOREALIS. *The northern lights.*

The dictionaries give us these alternatives:

First choice: aw-ROE-ruh BOE-ree-AY'-liss

Second choice: aw-ROE-ruh BOE-ree-AL'-iss

AUTOPSY, NOUN. *An examination; an inspection.*

While *autopsy* is used generally to designate the inspection by dissection of a dead body, the literal meaning of the word

is neither gruesome nor repellent. Autopsy is from the Greek *autoptos*, which means simply "seen by oneself."

As a matter of fact, it would be entirely proper to use the word in this sense: "From my autopsy of the painting, I am convinced that it is a genuine Rembrandt," for *Webster's* first definition is: "Personal observation or examination; seeing with one's own eyes."

Do not say "uh-TAHP-see." The word should be accented on the first syllable only, as:

First choice: AW-tahp-see
Second choice: AW-tup-see

AUXILIARY, ADJECTIVE. *Assisting; supporting; subsidiary.*

Do not telescope this word, as "awg-ZILL-uh-ree"; nor use the overly precise "awg-ZILL-ee-air-ee." The third syllable is simply "yuh":

awg-ZILL-yuh-ree

AVENUE, NOUN. *A street; figuratively, a way of approach.*

Do not say "AV-'n-yuh," nor give to one of the most famous streets of the world the barbaric name common among far too many New Yorkers: "Fith AV-'n-yuh."

I neither imply nor wish you to infer that New Yorkers alone are guilty of dropping the second "f" from *fifth* and making a pretty bad mess of *avenue*. These mispronunciations are heard on every hand.

"Fith" for *fifth*, of course, is an outright vulgarism wherever it is heard. The pronunciation "AV-'n-yuh," too, is several degrees wide of the mark.

The second syllable of *avenue* has the obscured (uh) sound. The "u" in the third syllable has the long sound, as in *rebuke*, *human*, *music*; or the "ōō" sound of *noodle*, *noon*, *noose*.

When you say *rebuke*, *human*, *music*, there is a clearly discernible sound of the consonant "y" just before the "u," as: ree-BYOOK, HYOO-m'n, MYOO-zic. This same "y" sound may precede the "u" in *avenue*, if you prefer.

Correct pronunciations: AV-uh-noo
Or: AV-uh-nyoo

AVIATION, NOUN. *The practice of operating airplanes.*

The first syllable of *aviation* and *aviator* should never have the "av" sound of *have*, as "AV-ee-AY'-shun." Nor should the -or of *aviator* be given the sound of "ore," to rhyme with *bore*, *core*, as "AV'-ee-AY'-tore."

The word *aviation* comes to us from the Latin *avis*, "bird," pronounced "AY'-viss." In the first syllable of *aviation* and *aviator*, the "ay" sound of *cave*, *save* is the only sound that is sanctioned by the dictionaries. Accent the first and third syllables:

AY-vee-AY'-shun
AY'-vee-AY'-ter

AYE

This word has two meanings and two pronunciations:

(1) *Aye* is used principally in poetry to mean "always," "forever," "eternally," as: "My love will endure for aye."

(2) *Aye* is used in voting to mean "yes," as: "The ayes have it"; and aboard ship it also means "yes," as: "Aye, aye, sir."

Form number one rhymes with *day*; form number two rhymes with *eye*:

(1) "Forever": AY
(2) "Yes": EYE

BABEL. *The tower where the confusion of languages is said to have occurred.*

Do not say "Tower of Babble."

After the flood (Genesis xi: 1-9), ". . . the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." Mankind, in the land of Shinar, attempted to build a tower whose top would reach into heaven. The Lord came down and confounded their language and scattered them "abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Babel, contrary to all belief, has only a roundabout connection with the babble, or confusion of tongues, which the Lord's act brought about. *Babel* is the name of the city where the tower was built. It is from the Assyro-Babylonian word *Bab-ilu*, which means "gate of God." *Babble* is from the Latin *babulus*, "babbler."

The name should not rhyme with *dabble*, *gabble*, *rabble*; it should rhyme with *fable*, *gable*, *table*.

Correct pronunciation:

BAY-b'1

BADE, VERB. *Past tense of "bid."*

Not "baid," to rhyme with *maid*. The only approved pronunciation rhymes with *mad*, *pad*, *sad*:

BAD

BAKELITE, NOUN. *A plastic used instead of hard rubber or celluloid, especially for radio panels.*

Bakelite is not from *bake* but from *Baekeland* (Leo Hendrik), the Belgian-American inventor of bakelite. The word has three syllables:

BAY-kuh-lite

BANAL, ADJECTIVE. *Commonplace; flat; trite.*

Question: Recently, on one of the leading "Quiz" programs, the quizzee said that something was "buh-NAL." The quizzier volunteered: "That word is pronounced 'BAN-ull.'" Please, which is right?

Answer: Either is permissible, but neither quizzee nor quizzier used the pronunciation in best usage. *Webster's* lists four pronunciations, in the following order:

First choice: **BAY-null**

Second choice: **buh-NAL**

Third choice: **buh-NAHL**

Fourth choice: **BAN-ull**

BANQUET, NOUN. *A ceremonious dinner.*

Not "BAN-kwet." Rhyme the first syllable with *fang*, *hang*:

BANG-kwet

BASES, NOUN. *Plural of "base" and "basis."*

This query is frequently received: "Are the broadcasters correct in saying 'BAY-seez' for *bases*?"

The answer is yes and no.

Let us examine this statement: "The United States naval *base* at Guam is one of the most important of the *bases* (BAY-seez) in the Pacific." The pronunciation "BAY-seez" in the

sentence is incorrect. The proper plural of *base* is *bases*, pronounced "BAY-sez," to rhyme with *faces*, *races*, *spaces*.

However, *bases* also is the plural of the word *basis*, and in this meaning is correctly pronounced "BAY-seez."

Singular

Base

Basis

Plural

Bases: BAY-sez

Bases: BAY-seez

Now it so happens that *basis*, in military parlance, is often used in the exact meaning of the word *base*; therefore, in the following sentence, the pronunciation "BAY-seez" is correct: "The United States naval *basis* at Pearl Harbor is one of the most important of the *bases* (BAY-seez) in the Pacific."

Speakers, then, will wisely avoid the pronunciation "BAY-seez" unless it is entirely clear that the plural of *basis* is meant.

BATON, NOUN. *A wand with which a leader beats time, as for an orchestra.*

Baton is a French word that means "staff" or "truncheon."

The Standard American pronunciation is ba-TON, or buh-TON, the second syllable rhyming with *con*, *don*. Few American dictionaries recognize the pronunciation.

Webster's, *Winston's*, *Macmillan's*, and other authorities show as first choice the French pronunciation, which they list as "bâ-tôn." The capital "N" is the dictionary method of indicating that the "n" is nasalized, as in the French words *bon*, *mon*, *ton*. There is no sound like this in English. Readers who are not familiar with diacritical marks mistake "bâ-tôn" for "ba-TAHN"; but the French say: ba-TAW (N).

The second-choice pronunciation is a good rhyme for *fatten*. This is the identical pronunciation heard in the name Baton Rouge, the only instance in which it ever occurs.

The recommendation of this book is to avoid the French ba-TAW (N) for the reason that it smacks of affectation. And, of course, "BAT-un" doesn't exist except in the name Baton Rouge.

ba-TON or buh-TON

BAYOU, NOUN. *A sluggish, tortuous stream.*

Question: How should one pronounce the word *bayou*?

Answer: Do not say "BY-yoe" or "BAY-yoe." Rhyme the second syllable with *coo*, *woo*:

BY-oo

BECAUSE, CONJUNCTION. *By reason of; for the reason that.*

Many speakers mistakenly say "be-KUZZ," rhyming the second syllable with *fuzz*. This has no dictionary support, although the error is made by persons of cultured speech, especially in the North, East, and Middle West.

It is worthy of note that *cause*, *clause*, *pause* are not given the "uzz" sound, even by the illiterate.

The second syllable of *because* should rhyme with *paws*, *laws*, *saws*:

bee-KAWZ

BEEN, VERB. *Past participle of the verb "to be."*

Do not say "ben," to rhyme with *men*, nor "bean," to rhyme with *mean*. The first is a vulgarism, the second a Britishism. Neither is good usage in the United States, although the pronunciation "ben" once prevailed here, as is shown by the rhyme in Whittier's famous verse:

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

Some readers will contend that the pronunciation "bean" must be correct by analogy with *green*, *queen*, *screen*, *seen*. This reasoning seems logical until we recall a warning in *Webster's*: "One cannot be entirely certain of the pronunciation of any English word solely from the spelling."

For United States use, *been* should rhyme with *pin*, *sin*, *win*:

bin

BENEFICIARY, NOUN. *One who receives anything as a gift; the person named in an insurance policy.*

Do not say "BEN-uh-FISH'-uh-ree."

This is a six-syllable word. It is seldom pronounced correctly, even by insurance (not "IN-shoor-unss"; better say "in-SHOOR-unss") people.

The pronunciation shown below is the only one author-

ized by accepted dictionaries. The main accent is on the third syllable; the first and third receive a secondary accent:

BEN-ee-FISH'-ee-AIR-ee

BERCHTESGADEN, PROPER NOUN. *A town in southeastern Bavaria, Germany.*

Chancellor Adolf Hitler's elaborate and strongly guarded mountain chalet (shall-LAY) is the retreat where he plotted the Austrian *Anschluss* (AHN-shlōōs), the gobbling of the Czech Republic, and other events that led to the Second World War. It was also the scene of *der Führer's* first historic conference with the former English Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain.

Berchtesgaden is noted for its rock-salt mines and as a center of the toy industry.

The "ch" in the first syllable is the German fricative sound, as in *ach*, *dich*, *nach*, not the English "ch" of *rich* or the "k" of *rick*.

BAIR(CH)'-tess-GAH-den

Note: Hitler's first name is not pronounced "AD-awlf" or "AY-dawlf." Give the first syllable the "ah" sound: AH-dawlf.

BERSERK, ADJECTIVE. *Frenzied; enraged.*

Berserk, a hero in Scandinavian mythology, was famed for the heedless frenzy of his fighting. He would charge into battle, wearing no armor, foaming at the mouth, and howling like a wolf, a figure so terrifying that no enemy had the courage to face him. His stalwart sons, too, were mighty warriors. They bore the family name of *Berserker*.

This word should not be accented on the second syllable, as "ber-SERK."

The first syllable, which receives the accent, rhymes with *her*; the second syllable rhymes with *perk*:

BER-serk

BESTIAL, ADJECTIVE. *Like a beast; brutal; depraved.*

Although the word means "like a beast" and derives from the Latin *bestia*, from which *beast* derives, we should not pronounce the first syllable as "beast."

First choice: **BEST-yul**

Second choice: **BESS-chul**

BETHLEHEM, PROPER NOUN. *A town in Judea, the birth-place of Jesus.*

Do not say "BETH-luh-ham," rhyming the third syllable with *am, ham*.

Would you believe that *bedlam* ("a lunatic asylum," "a madhouse") has even a remote connection with Bethlehem? It is, as a matter of fact, the same word in a shortened form.

This is the way it came about: In the fifteenth century, the London hospital, St. Mary of Bethlehem, began to devote itself exclusively to caring for the insane. The British aptitude for word telescoping soon shortened the name to the one word *Bethlehem*, which in time became *Bedlam*.

Before long, the name *Bedlam* was applied to any asylum for the insane. From the continued uproar characteristic of asylums, *bedlam* (without the capital "B") later came into use as a general term for any din or noisy confusion.

First choice: **BETH-lee-um**

Second choice: **BETH-lee-hem**

Note: In much the same manner, the name *Magdalene* has given us the word *maudlin*, "tearful," "excessively sentimental," because, for centuries, painters have drawn Mary Magdalene with eyes red and swollen from weeping.

BIOGRAPHY, NOUN. *The written account of one's life; a history of a person.*

Never say "bee-AHG-ruh-fee."

The "i" in the Greek prefix *bio-* (*biology, biograph, biolysis, biometer*, etc.) must always have the long "i" sound:

by-AHG-ruh-fee

BISON, NOUN. *A large shaggy-maned oxlike quadruped.*

The American Bison, genus "*Bison*," which once roamed the prairies in countless millions, is now all but extinct, except for certain protected herds in national parks of the United States and Canada.

The name *buffalo* should not be applied to this animal. The true buffalo is of a different genus, "*Bubalus bubalus*," and is native to India, Malaya, and Egypt.

Bison should not be pronounced "BISS-un," to rhyme with *listen*. Use the long "i" sound, as in *by*: **BY-sun**

Note: In *python* use the long “i” sound in the first syllable and the “ah” sound in the second:

PY-thahn

BLITZKRIEG, GERMAN. *Lightning war.*

Blitzkrieg is from the German *Blitz*, “flash (of lightning),” and *Krieg*, “war.” The Nazis use the word to describe the modern strategy of an overpowering, lightninglike attack, which finds the enemy unprepared for successful defense or retaliation.

Blitz rhymes with *flits*. *Krieg*, in southern Germany and in that part of Germany which formerly was Austria, rhymes with *creek*, *Greek*. In northern Germany, the “g” of *Krieg* is given the fricative “ch” sound of *ach*, *ich*, *dich*. By many, this is considered the standard pronunciation.

Correct pronunciation:

First choice: **BLITS-kree(ch)**

Second choice: **BLITS-kreek**

Third choice (English): **BLITS-kreeg**

BOLOGNA, NOUN. *An Italian city; a kind of sausage.*

The correct pronunciation of this word will have a strange sound to the average reader. We most often hear “buh-LONE-nuh” or “buh-LONE-nee,” pronunciations that the dictionaries call colloquialisms.

The “o” in the first two syllables should be long, as in *toe*; the “a” in the third syllable is broad (ah), as in *father*:

boe-LONE-yah

BOMB

NOUN. *An explosive projectile.*

VERB. *To bombard; to drop bombs.*

Surprisingly, the commonly heard “bum” is recognized by the *Webster*, *Oxford*, *Macmillan*, *Century*, and *Winston* dictionaries as an acceptable second-choice pronunciation. *Funk and Wagnalls* lists “bum” as first choice!

Best usage, however, rhymes the word with *tom*:

bahm

BONA-FIDE, LATIN. *In good faith; genuine.*

Do not say “BAH-nuh FIDE.”

The "o" in *bona* should be long as in *toe*. *Fide* should not rhyme with *hide*; it is a word of two syllables:

BOE-nuh FY-dee

Memory Verse

You will keep your accents tidy

If you say it's BOE-nuh FY-dee.

Note: Vice versa likewise has four syllables: VY-see VER-suh.

BORROW, VERB. *To receive from another, as a loan.*

The common mispronunciation "BAH-ree" is as dialectal as are the ruralisms "MIN-nee" for *minnow* and "WID-dee" for *widow*. Moreover, it is incorrect to smother the second syllable and say: "BAH-ruh."

Never give the "uh" sound to "-ow" in such words as *minnow*, *widow*, *shadow*, *sparrow*, *yellow*, *arrow*, *billow*, *fellow*, *mellow*, *willow*, *tomorrow*, or to the final "o" in *potato*, *albino*, *torpedo*, *stiletto*, *tomato*.

The final syllable of all these and other similar words must have the long "o" sound, as in *toe*, heard correctly in *cargo*, *echo*, *hero*, *zero*, *presto*, *motto*.

Correct pronunciation:

BAH-roe

(See TOMORROW, page 245.)

BOUDOIR, NOUN. *A woman's small and daintily furnished room.*

A *boudoir*, literally, is a place for pouting (from the French *bouder*, "to pout or sulk").

Do not say "BOOD-wawr." The vowel sound of the second syllable is a short "a," almost as in *carrot*. Say:

bood-WAR

BOUQUET, NOUN. *A nosegay; an aroma.*

Do not say "BOE-kay."

While this word is of French origin, it has been in wide use by English-speaking peoples for centuries.

The pronunciation "boe-KAY," too, is commonly heard, but it appears in only one of the nine dictionaries consulted and is listed as second choice.

Almost a century ago, George H. Calvert published this stern and austere warning: "‘Boe-KAY’ is a corruption as dissonant to the ear as were to the eye the plucking of a rose from a variegated nosegay and leaving only its thorny stem!"

The first-choice pronunciation of all dictionaries, and the only choice of most, rhymes the first syllable with *woo*, *coo*. The second syllable receives the accent:

First choice: boo-KAY

Second choice (dubious): boe-KAY

BOUTONNIÈRE, NOUN. *A flower to be worn in the button-hole.*

Not "button-EER."

The word is from the French and has become only a little Anglicized. Accent the third syllable, which rhymes with *fair*, *hair*.

boo-tun-YAIR

BRAHMAN, NOUN. *A bovine mammal widely domesticated in India, China, the East Indies, and East Africa; named for the Brahman caste.*

This animal is generally known as the Zebu (ZEE-byoo). In India, where it is regarded with profound reverence and is permitted to roam at will, it is known as the Sacred Cow.

In Texas and Brazil, especially, the Zebu is crossed with domestic cattle to produce a breed that is not only resistant to ticks and other blood-sucking insects, but that also is quite immune to Texas fever.

Texas cattlemen corrupt the name *Brahman* to "BRAY-mer." The correct pronunciation employs the broad "a" (ah) in the first syllable. The second syllable is spelled *man*, not *mer*:

BRAH-m'n

BRASSIÈRE, NOUN. *A woman's supporting undergarment.*

The current American pronunciation "bruh-ZHEER," with the "zh" sound of *azure*, has no dictionary support.

As a matter of fact, we give to this French word a meaning which does not coincide with that of the French dictionaries.

In the *Larousse* French dictionary, a *brassière* is described

as: "A little camisole for binding the bodies of infants; a brace; the strap of a haversack." And *camisole* has this definition: "A garment for women; a short garment with sleeves; a strait jacket of strong canvas used to restrain the violent actions of the insanel"

The second-choice pronunciation of *brassière* is approximately as the French say the word. It has three syllables, and the third, which rhymes with *air* and *hair*, receives the accent. In the first-choice (Anglicized) pronunciation, the vowel sound of the first syllable is the obscure "a" of *sofa* (uh); the second syllable rhymes with *fear*.

First choice: bruh-ZEER

Second choice: brass-ee-AIR

BRITICISM, NOUN. *A characteristic of the British.*

Question: From your frequent use of the term *Briticism*, are we to infer that you are unfriendly, if not actually antagonistic, to the British?

Answer: Heaven help us, no! The word *Briticism* has no derogatory sense whatever. It simply means a word, idiom, usage, or pronunciation that is customary in England but that is not sanctioned or current in the United States.

We must not forget that the language of the British and the language of the United States long ago went their separate ways, and since the divorce they have developed independently of each other along widely divergent lines. Accordingly, we have what amounts to two distinct "English" languages, and each is the correct tongue of the country in which it is spoken.

Note that there is no "h" following the "s" in the word *Briticism*. The word should always begin with a capital "B."

Correct pronunciation:

BRIT-uh-siz'm

BRONCHIAL TUBES. *The tubes branching off from the windpipe.*

Inasmuch as every person has bronchial tubes, a quite indispensable part of the respiratory equipment, it is surprising how frequently we hear "BRAHN-ik-ull tooobs."

In *bronchial*, do not put the “i” between “n” and “ch.” In *tubes*, use the long “u” (yoo) sound as in *feud* (fyood), not the “oo” sound as in *food*.

Correct pronunciation:

BRAHNG-kee-ul TYOOBZ

Note: The word *respiratory*, too, is seldom given the preferred pronunciation: “ree-SPY’-ruh-TOE-ree.” Many physicians themselves do not know that this is the first choice of virtually all modern American dictionaries.

BUFFET, NOUN. *A sideboard, especially one without a mirror.*

Two mispronunciations are frequently noted: “buff-FAY” and “BOO-fay.”

This is a loan word from the French. The pronunciation has been Anglicized somewhat, but the word still is French in essence in that the second syllable is accented and the final “t” is not pronounced.

The British pronounce it “BUFF-it,” a pronunciation that rates first place in the *Oxford*, *Jones*, *Century*, *Funk and Wagnalls*, and *Hempl* dictionaries. Nevertheless, the pronunciation “BUFF-it” is not widespread in the United States.

The vowel sound in the first syllable is the short “ōō” of *foot*, not the long “ōō” of *food*. Accent the second syllable.

U.S.: bōō-FAY

British: BUFF-it

BUOY, NOUN. *A floating channel-marker.*

Question: After spending several years trying to remember that I should call a *buoy* a “boy,” I now understand to my dismay that the word should rhyme with *hooey*, a pronunciation that I went to great pains to unlearn. Now what must I do?

Answer: Be of good cheer. Both forms are accepted as correct. There is, however, a preponderance of authority in favor of the pronunciation to rhyme with *hooey*. Four of six American dictionaries (*Webster’s*, *Hempl’s*, *Macmillan’s*, and *Winston’s*) list it as first choice.

First choice: BOO-ee

Second choice: boy

Note: The breeches of breeches buoy and the colloquial breeches for "trousers" should not rhyme with reaches, leaches. The correct rhyme is with switches, ditches:

BRITCH-ez

BUREAUCRACY, NOUN. *A government dominated or hampered by its departments or bureaus.*

We have two choices here. In the first, which is greatly prevalent in the United States, the second syllable rhymes with *dock, sock*. In the second choice, the second syllable rhymes with *hoe, toe*.

First choice: bew-RAHK-ruh-see

Second choice: bew-ROE-kruh-see

CACOPHONY, NOUN. *Discord; harsh, dissonant sound.*

Beware of "KAK'-uh-FOE-nee."

Accent the second syllable, which has the "ah" vowel sound:

kuh-KAHF-oh-nee

CAFFEINE, NOUN. *A basic alkaloid found in coffee.*

Coffee-program announcers to the contrary notwithstanding, "kaf-FEEN" has no sanction. It is not to be found in the dictionaries.

In Standard American speech there are two permissible pronunciations:

First choice: KAF-een

Second choice: KAF-ee-in

CAIRO, PROPER NOUN.

The city in Illinois is: **KAY-roe**

The city in Egypt is: **KY-roe**

CANDIDATE, NOUN. *One who offers himself for election.*

The commonly heard "kan-duh-dit" is not only a very unpleasant combination of sounds, but it is also incorrect United States usage.

It may be hard to believe, but it is nevertheless true that

the words *candidate*, *candid*, and *candor* derive from the same Latin word, *candidus*, "white." In Roman times, the candidate presented himself in public in a toga made glittering white and spotless by chalk. His stainless robe was symbolic of the purity of his purpose in seeking office.

The "a" in the third syllable of *candidate* should have the long sound (ay), as in *day*, *nay*.

Correct pronunciation:

KAN-di-dait

Note: Do not confuse *aspirant* (correct pronunciation: ass-PY-r'nt) with *candidate*. Strictly speaking, an aspirant to office does not become a candidate until he is nominated for election.

CANINE, ADJECTIVE. *Pertaining to dogs.*

Question: My friend insists that the first syllable of *canine* is *can*, to rhyme with *man*. Is this correct?

Answer: The pronunciation "KAN-ine" is current in England. These are the sanctioned forms for the United States:

KAY-nine

CANTONMENT, NOUN. *A place where troops are assembled and sheltered.*

Cantonment is a supersurprise word.

The pronunciation that prevails in American usage, and especially in military usage, is kan-TONE-m'nt, the second syllable rhyming with *bone*, *lone*.

Here are the listings in the ten accepted dictionaries of my library:

kan-TOON-ment,	8 listings
kan-TAHN-ment,	7 listings
KAN-tun-ment,	5 listings
kan-TONE-ment,	5 listings
kan-TUN-ment,	2 listings

Despite the dictionaries, I believe it is safe to say that "KAN-tun-ment, kan-TOON-ment, kan-TUN-ment" are never heard in modern American speech. So let us disregard them.

First choice: kan-TONE-m'nt
Second choice: kan-TAHN-m'nt

Note. The pronunciation "kan-TOON-ment" is customary in British usage. But why the second-syllable -ton- should suggest "toon," to rhyme with *loon*, is a mystery.

CARBURETOR, NOUN. *A device for mixing air and gasoline.*

Do not say "KAHR'-buh-RAY-der."

Most dictionaries give to the word *carburetor* a pronunciation that I have never once heard in a long life of listening to American speech.

If you should follow dictionary consensus and say "KAHR'bew-RET-er," people in the automotive world, as well as millions of automobile owners, would think you had taken leave of your senses. Therefore my advice is: Don't say "KAHR'bew-RET-er."

That pronunciation apparently got into the dictionaries long ago when the automobile was a costly and unpredictable experiment. "KAHR'bew-RET-er" has remained in the dictionaries out of pure inertia.

Correct pronunciation: **KAHR'buh-RAY-ter**

CARIBBEAN, PROPER NOUN. *The Atlantic Ocean between the West Indies and Central and South America.*

The sea was named for the Carib tribes of South American Indians. They were warlike and cannibalistic, excellent canoe makers, and skilled in the use of sails. The tribal name is pronounced "KAR-ib," the first syllable rhyming with the *ar-* of *arrogant*.

On his first voyage, Columbus discovered the Caribbean Sea; he explored it further on later voyages. The Caribbean Sea (often erroneously called the "Spanish Main") was formerly frequented by pirates and privateers who preyed on the cities of the mainland.

Since the opening of the Panama Canal, the sea has been of enormous importance in the defense of both coasts of the United States. When Charles Evans Hughes was Secretary of State in the Harding Cabinet, he declared: "So far as the region of the Caribbean Sea is concerned, if there were no Monroe Doctrine, one would have to be created for it."

Correct pronunciation:

First choice: **KAR-i-BEE'-un**

Second choice: **kuh-RIB-ee-un**

CARILLON, NOUN. *A set of bells, usually tuned to the chromatic scale.*

The word *carillon* came into the English language from the French. The French pronunciation is occasionally heard, but the nasal "n," as in *bon, mon, ton*, is a difficult and often impossible sound for Americans to duplicate.

Modern authorities sanction three pronunciations. In the order of their acceptability, they are:

First choice: **KA-rill-ahn**

Second choice: **kuh-RILL-yun**

Third choice (French): **kah-ree-YAW(N)**

Note: Bell music dates from earliest medieval times. One of the largest carillons in the United States is that of the Riverside Church, in New York City, containing seventy-two bells, the largest of which weighs twenty tons.

CARROUSEL, NOUN. *A merry-go-round.*

Do not say "kuh-ROW-zul."

This word has no connection with *carousal*, which means "a drunken revel."

Carrousel (note the difference in spelling) is a word from the French and means "a tournament," "a tilting match." It was applied to the maneuver of cavalry troops in an exhibition of various evolutions. The name *carrousel* has been given to the merry-go-round because of its resemblance to a tournament of cavalymen.

The "a" in the first syllable is short, as in *carrot*. Accent the third syllable:

kar-oo-ZELL

CARTON

CARTOON

We should not confuse these words. The first designates a pasteboard container; the second, a drawing or sketch, usually humorous or satirical.

Carton is accented on the first syllable: **KAHR-t'n**

Cartoon is accented on the second syllable: **kahr-TOON**

CASUALTY, NOUN. *A soldier killed, wounded, or captured; a civilian killed or wounded in a bombardment.*

Casualty is most frequently mispronounced "KAZH-ull-tee," although the contortion "KAZH-you-AL'-uh-tee" is not uncommon.

As any dictionary will affirm, this is a word of four syllables, and each should be distinctly voiced:

Correct pronunciation: KAZH-yoo-ull-tee

CATCH, VERB. *To seize or capture.*

Do not say "ketch," to rhyme with *fetch*, as gross an error as is "RED-ish" for *radish*. The "a" in both words is the short "a" of *mat*, *mad*. (On the other hand, the short "e" of *guess*, *mess*, is correct in *wrestler*. Never say "RASS-ler.")

Catch must rhyme with *batch*, *latch*:

katch

CATCHUP

CATSUP

or

KETCHUP

NOUN. *A thick, seasoned sauce.*

The names of this condiment do not derive from the verb *catch*, the noun *cat*, nor from *ketch*, "a sailing vessel."

According to the various dictionaries referred to, the origin is obscured by an Oriental haze. *Catchup-catsup-ketchup* springs from the Malay *kecap* or *kechap*, or the Chinese *koe-chiap* or *ke-tsiap*, or the Japanese or Javanese *kitjaq*, which, it must be admitted, is a rather prodigious hop, skip, and jump.

Which of the three is the correct form to use? Frankly, I hesitate to say. The dictionaries also do not commit themselves, preferring to list the three variations, with the note, "see *ketchup*" after *catchup*, "see *catsup*" after *ketchup*, and so on.

Catchup, *catsup* (sometimes humorously called "cat's soup"), or *ketchup* is made from the juice of various fruits, mushrooms, or walnuts! In the United States, any kind but tomato is little known.

Correct pronunciations:

catchup: KATCH-up

catsup: KAT-sup

ketchup: KETCH-up

CATER-CORNERED, ADJECTIVE. *Diagonal; oblique.*

This word usually is mispronounced "catty-cornered" or "kitty-cornered." Other amusing variants are *antegodlin*, *slaunchwise*, *catawampous*, and *woppy-jawed*.

Cater-cornered appears to be a word of uncertain, perhaps dialectal, origin. But it is so widely used, occurring frequently in quite serious writing and speech, that it must be accepted as having a permanent place in the American vocabulary. Usage will some day elevate it to the rank of other respectable idioms that have lived down their illegitimate or questionable origins.

Be sure to pronounce the "r" in the second syllable:

First choice: KAT'-er-KAWR-nerd

Second choice: KAY'-ter-KAWR-nerd

CATHOLIC, ADJECTIVE. *Broad; comprehensive; liberal.*

Here is a mystery. When this word is used as an adjective, as: "His taste in literature is *catholic*," it will be pronounced "kuh-THAHL-ik" nine times in every ten. Why? No one knows.

The word *catholic*, noun and adjective, must never be accented on the second syllable.

The only approved pronunciation is:

KATH-oh-lik

CEREBRAL, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to the hemispheres of the brain.*

Many speakers, including a goodly number of physicians, accent this word on the second syllable: "suh-REE-br'l"; but there is scant dictionary support for such a pronunciation.

Cerebral and *cerebrum* should be accented only on the first syllable, which rhymes approximately with *hair*, *pair*:

cerebral: SAIR-ee-br'l

cerebrum: SAIR-ee-brum

CHAISE LONGUE, FRENCH. *An elongated seat or couch.*

The common mispronunciation "chase lounge" results from two errors: (a) confusing *chaise* with the English word *chase*; and (b) mistaking *longue* for the English word *lounge*. Note the difference in spelling. *Chaise* and *chase*, and *longue* and *lounge*, have nothing whatever in common.

The French *chaise* means "chair." *Longue* is not, as many believe, the peculiar French spelling of *lounge*; it means "long." *Chaise longue*, then, literally translated, means "chair long."

Chaise rhymes approximately with *daze*, *haze*. *Longue* is similar to the English *long*, but the "n" is nasalized; and the "g" has the hard sound, as in *stronger*: shaze LAW(N)-guh.

Correct English: shaze LONG

CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES, FRENCH. *A diplomatic representative.*

Radio newscasters and commentators please note: this phrase is not "charge dee affairs."

Do not let the similarity between the French *chargé* and *affaires* and the English *charge* and *affairs* deceive you. Fifty million Frenchmen can't be wrong.

Chargé is a word of two syllables. The "s" of *affaires* is silent:

shar-ZHAY daf-FAIR

CHASTISEMENT, NOUN. *Discipline; punishment.*

Since this word appears often in the Scriptures, ministers especially will want to make note that few dictionaries sanction the often heard "chass-TIZE-ment"—that is, with the second syllable accented and rhyming with prize.

Place the accent on the first syllable, and rhyme the second syllable with *fizz*:

CHASS-tizz-ment

CHAUFFEUR, NOUN. *A person employed to drive a motor vehicle.*

Is "sho-FER" (second syllable accented) too "highbrow" for

ordinary mortals? The dictionaries do not think so, for it is the predominate first choice of the authorities:

First choice: sho-FER

Second choice: SHO-fer

CHEESES

Cheese has been an important staple food since the first cattle were domesticated. Cheese is made and eaten in virtually every country. There are about four hundred varieties in the world today.

The following names are frequently mispronounced:

Brie. A soft cheese originating in Brie, France. The name rhymes with *tree*: **bree**.

Camembert. Do not pronounce the final "t." *First choice: KAM-em-bair*. *Second choice*: Use the French nasal "n" in the second syllable: **ka-mah(n)-BAIR**.

Cheddar. A smooth cheese known in the United States as American cheese. Say: **CHED-er**.

Edam. A cheese of Holland. *First choice: EE-dam*. *Second choice (Dutch): ay-DAHM*.

Gorgonzola. A cheese made in Italy. Say: **GAWR-gun-ZOE'-luh**.

Gruyère. The "u" has the French sound, as in *vu, rue, tu*; accent the second syllable: **grü-YAIR**.

Neufchatel. A famous cheese of France. Do not pronounce the "f." Say: **nuh-shah-TELL**.

Parmesan. A dry, sweet cheese of Italy. Do not accent the second syllable. Say: **pahr-mee-ZAN**.

CHEMURGY, NOUN.

This word is of comparatively recent origin. Its coinage is credited to Dr. William J. Hale of Midland, Michigan, in the early 1930's.

Here is the definition of the G. and C. Merriam Company, publishers of the *Webster* dictionaries: "*Chemurgy*. Noun. (*Chemistry plus urgy*). That branch of applied chemistry devoted to industrial utilization of organic raw materials, especially from farm products, as in the use of soybean oil for paints and varnishes, and of southern pine for paper pulp."

The noun *chemurgy* is accented on the first syllable, which is identical with the *chem-* of *chemistry*. The “g” is soft, as in *urge*. The adjective *chemurgic* is accented on the second syllable.

Correct pronunciations:

chemurgy: KEM-er-jee
chemurgic: kem-ER-jik

CHEVROLET, PROPER NOUN. *An automobile named for a French racing driver.*

Avoid the vulgarisms “SHIV-uh-lay,” “SHEV-vee,” “SHIV-vee.”

Chevrolet has three syllables. The “e” in the first syllable is short, as in *revolution*; the second syllable is identical with the name *roe*; accent the third syllable:

shev-roe-LAY

Note: Those who are mindful of their speech will not call a *coupé* a “coop,” speak of the framework of a car as the “CHASS-iss,” call the steering wheel a “steern weel,” accent *sedan* on the first syllable, “SEE-dan,” or call the radiator “RAD’-ee-AY-ter.” Correct pronunciations are:

coupé: koo-PAY
chassis: SHASS-ee
steering wheel: steer-ing hweel
sedan: see-DAN
radiator: RAY’-dee-AY-ter

CHIC

NOUN. *Artistic cleverness; stylishness.*

ADJECTIVE. *Possessing style.*

Do not say “chick.”

It will surprise many women readers, especially those who are engaged in designing, making, or selling women’s apparel, that the French word *chic* is not the *ne plus ultra* of smartness and elegance they may have supposed it to be.

Chic, as a matter of fact, is designated by most dictionaries as a colloquialism.

The *Larousse* French dictionary likewise frowns upon *chic* in proper speech and writing, designating it as a vulgarism (*populaire*).

At any rate, if we must use the word, let us not pronounce it as we do the first syllable of *chicken*. Pronounce “ch” like “sh,” and rhyme the word with *cheek*:

sheek

Note: The French word *clique* should not be pronounced “click.” Use the long “e” sound:

kleek

CHICANERY, NOUN. *Mean or unfair practice; dishonest trickery.*

Do not say “chi-KAN-ree” or “chicken-ree.”

The “ch” in the first syllable should have the sound of “sh,” as in *ship*. The “a” in the second syllable is long, as in *cain*. Be sure to pronounce all four syllables:

shi-KAIN-er-ee

CHICLE, NOUN. *The gum of the sapodilla tree, used as the chief ingredient of chewing gum.*

In the United States, *chicle* is almost universally pronounced to rhyme with *nickel*.

Thousands of tons of chicle are imported annually from Mexico and Central America for the manufacture of chewing gum. Chicle is collected by tapping the sapodilla tree in much the same manner as the rubber tree is “milked.” In Spanish-American countries, Mexico especially, chewing gum is known as “chicle.” On the streets and plazas of Mexico, native urchins hawk penny packets of American chewing gum with weird and minor cries of “Chi-c-l-e-s! Chi-c-l-e-s!”

Correct pronunciation:

United States: CHIK-’l

Spanish: CHEE-klay

CHIFFON, NOUN. *A kind of soft, sheer silk cloth.*

The American way with words is a wonder to behold. Among our many peccadillos is the way in which we have adopted the French word *chiffon* and given to it a meaning that is directly opposite to its literal French meaning.

To us, *chiffon* is a dainty and exquisite silken material. To the French, *chiffon* is “an old and worthless rag” (“*vieux morceau d’étoffe*”), or “a trinket or ornament to be worn as

an accessory," as a bunch of ribbon or lace. In French, the literal meaning of *chiffonnier* is "a rag picker."

The pronunciation prevalent in the United States, "shif-FAHN," is to be found in but few dictionaries, and only then as second choice. "Shif-FAHN" is not the French pronunciation. In that language, the first syllable is "shee"; while the second syllable has the French nasal sound of *bon, mon, ton*: shee-FAW(N).

Most dictionaries tell us that we should say "SHIF-ahn." But that pronunciation simply doesn't exist in American speech.

Correct pronunciation: shi-FAHN

Try asking your favorite lingerie saleswoman for a pair of "SHIF-ahn" stockings. You'll get (1) a surprised look, and (2) a sweet but firm correction.

(See LINGERIE, page 163).

CHIROPODIST, NOUN. *One who treats ailments of the feet.*

When this word was first introduced in London in 1785, it was used to designate one who treats ailments of both the hand and the foot, as it is derived from the Greek *chiro*- ("hand") and *podos* ("foot"). Later, the word *manicurist* was coined to designate one who cares for the hand. Since then, the use of the word *chiropodist* has been restricted to one who cares for the feet only.

A graduate of a recognized college of chiropody receives the degree of D.S.C., Doctor of Surgical Chiropody.

One should not say "shuh-RAHP-uh-dist." In all words in which the Greek *chiro*- appears, the first syllable is pronounced "ky," to rhyme with *by*:

ky-RAHP-oh-dist

CIGARETTE, NOUN. *Finely cut tobacco enclosed in paper.*

Few words in general use are so frequently mispronounced. *Cigarette*, a word from the French, meaning "little cigar," should not have the main accent on the first syllable: "SIG-uh-ret."

This common error has been noted especially on network radio programs that advertise cigarettes. Few announcers, and virtually no masters of ceremonies, pronounce the word

correctly. One program even had for its musical theme the vocal refrain: "While a SIG-uh-ret is burning."

Cigarette, like most *-et* and *-ette* words of French origin—*minuet*, *croquette*, *brunette*, *gazette*, *quartet*, *roulette*, etc.—should be accented lightly on the last syllable.

Correct pronunciation:

sig-uh-RET

Note: Although the spelling *cigaret* is permissible, it has not been widely adopted. The better choice is the French spelling *-ette*.

Magazine, also a word from the French, should have the main accent on the third syllable, as:

MAG-uh-ZEEN'

CINCUS, NOUN.

Question: In a news magazine, Commander in Chief Joe Richardson was referred to as "the best *cincus* since Rear Admiral Reeves." What, please, is a *cincus*?

Answer: *Cincus* is an abbreviation for "Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet": *c* for "Commander," *-in-* for "in," *c* for "chief," *us* for "United States." The *f* for "fleet" is omitted for the sake of euphony.

According to the Public Relations Branch of the Navy Department, *cincus* is pronounced:

SINK-uss

CINE-, PREFIX. *Motion.*

Several mispronunciations are noted even among photographers, amateur and professional: "sin," "SY-nee," "SEE-nay," "KIN-ee," and "KY-nee."

Cine- is from the Greek word for "motion," *kinema*. The prefix is most familiar in *cinema* and *Cine-Kodak*.

When correctly pronounced, *cine-* rhymes with *finny*, *Minnie*:

SIN-ee.

CIRIBIRIBIN. PROPER NOUN. *The name of an Italian folk song.*

Question: What does *ciribiribin* mean, and how is it pronounced?

Answer: *Ciribiribin* is neither a name nor a word. It simply is an exclamation of joy or gaiety, similar to *tra-la-la!*

Two mispronunciations are frequent among singers of the radio especially: "CHEER-uh-BEER-uh-BIN'" and "CHEER-uh-BEER-uh-BEE'," although why the last syllable *-bin* should suggest "bee" is a complete mystery.

The "i" in all syllables has the long "e" sound, as in *machine, marine*:

CHEE-ree-BEE-ree-BEEN'

CLEOPATRA, PROPER NOUN. *The regular name of the queens of Egypt.*

Here is a bird's-eye view of the most famous of all Cleopatras:

She was born in 69 B.C. as the daughter of Ptolemy (TAHL-ee-mee) XIII. She became queen at seventeen and ruled jointly with her brother Ptolemy Dionysus, who was also her husband.

Deposed a few years later, Cleopatra induced Julius Caesar to fight a war on her behalf. In the war, her husband-brother was killed. She then lived openly with Caesar until his assassination.

Later, Cleopatra became the ally of Marc Antony. After the suicide of Antony, she put an end to her own life of intrigue and profligacy by applying a venomous serpent, an asp, to her breast. She had three children by Antony and, it is said, a son, Caesarion, by Julius Caesar. The dynasty of the Ptolemies ended with Cleopatra, and Egypt became a Roman province.

Three pronunciations are recognized by accepted authorities:

First choice: KLEE-oh-PAY'-truh

Second choice: KLEE-oh-PAH'-truh

Third choice: KLEE-oh-PAT'-ruh

CLIMATIC

CLIMACTIC

These words should not be confused.

Climatic means "of or pertaining to a climate," as: "a climatic change." It is pronounced:

kly-MAT-ik

Climactic refers to "a climax." Be sure to pronounce the second "c":

kly-MAK-tik

Note: The word *climacteric*, meaning a critical time of life, has two pronunciations:

First choice: kly-MAK-ter-ik

Second choice: KLY-mak-TAIR'-ik

CLIQUE, NOUN. *An exclusive circle of persons; a coterie.*

Not "klik," to rhyme with *flick*. The word rhymes with *bleak*, *sleek*:

kleeek

CLOTHES, NOUN. *Clothing; apparel; dress.*

Do you say "kloze" to rhyme with *doze*, *rose*?

There are several familiar words ending in *-th* that, in the plural form, are almost universally mispronounced. Say these words aloud: *months*, *depths*, *lengths*, *Smiths*, *fifths*, *health's*. Truthfully, now, didn't you say: "munts," "depss," "lengss," "Smisss," "fifss," "healts"?

But don't let it distress you. Be comforted by the knowledge that there is scarcely anyone who does not have this peculiarity of pronunciation in his speech. However, now that the error has been pointed out, we shall want to avoid it.

However, the silent "th" in the word *clothes* is quite acceptable, and has prevailed for centuries.

Either: kloze or kloethz

COIFFURE, NOUN. *A manner of dressing the hair.*

Do not say "KOY-fyoor."

This is a French loan word. In that language, the digraph "oi" has the sound of "wah," not the "oy" of *boy*, *coy*, *toy*. Although *coiffure* has been partly Anglicized, the first syllable retains its French value. The second syllable, however, has become completely English in pronunciation. Be sure to accent the second syllable:

kwah-FYOOOR

Note: The word *coiffure* can be correctly used to designate hats, as well as hair dress.

COLONEL, NOUN. *An army officer next in rank below a brigadier general.*

Question: Why is the first "l" in *colonel* pronounced "r"?

Answer: This is a prime example of the many inconsistencies found throughout English that cause orthoëpists to age before their time.

The spelling *colonel* is French. But the English pronunciation of today is a corruption of the Spanish *coronel*, a form that was common in Elizabethan English.

At one time, *colonel* was pronounced "KUL-nel," "ker-oh-NEL," and "KAWR-nill," but the current pronunciation replaced all others before 1800:

KER-n'l

This clever limerick was sent to me by Arthur G. Bennett, of Pasadena, California:

There once was an infantry colonel,
Who fought where the blitz was infolonel.
Want to know the result?
Then you'd better consult
The obit that was writ in the Jolonel.

COLUMNIST, NOUN. *One who conducts a column.*

Question: Since your newspaper column is so widely followed, why not teach your readers that "KAHL-yum" and "KAHL-yum-ist" are incorrect?

Answer: Doubtless the similarity of *column* to *volume* is the cause of the widespread mispronunciation.

In the newspaper world, and according to the dictionaries, a *columnist* is one who conducts a regular special department (usually one column wide and having a permanent title) in which he writes his individual opinions, which need not be and often are not the views of the paper that publishes his writings. Walter Winchell, Dorothy Thompson, and General Hugh Johnson are true columnists.

Such articles as my short and modest opus are usually termed "special" or "educational" features; the authors thereof are known as "feature writers." However, the term *column* is loosely applied to the work of any newspaper writer who conducts a regular feature.

In *column* and *columnist*, the second syllable is “um,” not “yum.” Be sure to pronounce the “n” in *columnist*.

Correct pronunciations:

column: KAHL-um

columnist: KAHL-um-nist

(See FIFTH COLUMNIST, page 121.)

COMBAT, VERB. *To fight with; to oppose.*

When *combat* is used as a verb, as “I will *combat* the disease,” the word is almost universally accented on the second syllable, as “kum-BAT.” Most of the older dictionaries do not sanction the second-syllable accent. Nevertheless, it is so firmly established in American speech that it would be quite unrealistic to label it as erroneous. Moreover, the second-syllable accent is now recognized by the newer dictionaries. (Some dictionaries show “KUM-bat” as second choice. Shun it; it’s obsolete.)

Verb and noun, first choice: KAHM-bat

Verb only, second choice: kum-BAT

COMBATANT, NOUN. *One who engages in combat.*

The foregoing discussion applies also to the words *combatant* and *noncombatant*. In American speech, the prevailing pronunciations accent the -bat- syllable, although only the most recently published dictionaries sanction the second-syllable accent.

combatant { *First choice*: KAHM-buh-t’nt
 { *Second choice*: kum-BAT’nt

noncombatant { *First choice*: non-KAHM-buh-t’nt
 { *Second choice*: non-kum-BAT’nt

COMELY, ADJECTIVE. *Fair; good-looking; handsome.*

The first syllable of *comely* must not rhyme with *comb*, *dome*, *roam*. The prevalent mispronunciation “KOEM-lee,” with the “o” sound of *toe*, doubtless results from an erroneous association of *comely* with its antonym *homely*. But the words have no relationship except an accidental similarity in spelling.

The first syllable of *comely* is exactly like the word *come*, and rhymes with *hum*, *mum*, *rum*:

KUM-lee

Note: The word *homely*, in addition to meaning "plain," "not handsome," also means "homelike," "simple but wholesome." Only recently has the word been used to designate ugliness.

COMINTERN. *The central organ of international Communists.*

Comintern is coined from the *com-* of *communist* and the *intern-* of *international*. The main accent is on the third syllable; the secondary accent is on the first:

KAHM-in-TERN'

COMMUNAL, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to the community; of the people as a whole.*

The pronunciation universally heard accents the second syllable: "kuh-MEW-n'l." This is not good usage.

In these days of world-wide communistic driftings, the word *communal* is especially significant, and most readers of this book will want to use the "better" pronunciation that is the first choice of all authorities.

First choice: KAHM-yoo-n'l

Second choice (dubious): kuh-MEW-n'l

COMMUNIQUÉ, NOUN. *Information given out officially; an official bulletin.*

Question: Why is the *-iqué* pronounced as two syllables in *communiqué*, but not in *antique*, *oblique*, *physique*, and *technique*?

Answer: In the French language, from which these words come, the "e" of *communiqué* is marked with an *accent aigu* (acute accent), thus: *é*. When this accent mark is used over the vowel, "é" has the approximate sound of "ay," as in *may*, *day*. The final "e" of *antique*, *oblique*, *physique*, *technique*, and such words, has no accent mark, and the *-ique*, therefore, has the customary pronunciation "eek."

Communiqué, because of the *accent aigu*, which gives

to the letter “é” the sound of “ay,” must consequently be a word of four syllables. No authority shows it as “kah-mew-NEEK.”

The pronunciation in best usage is the Anglicized version of the French word. The accents fall on the second and fourth syllables:

kuh-MEW-ni-KAY'

COMPTROLLER, NOUN. *An officer who supervises the handling of accounts and controls expenditures.*

Comptroller is a malformed nonsense word that, unhappily, seems to be gaining ground, especially among easygoing Americans of average education who traditionally love “big-mouthed words of large pretense.”

I do not know who introduced *comptroller* into the English language, but it is plain that he labored under the belief that *comptroller* was a fine French word of elegance and grace. He was wholly mistaken. The French word is *contrôleur*, from which the correct English *controller* has evolved.

For further proof of the illegitimacy of *comptroller*, see any standard American dictionary. Note, too, that the pronunciation given is not “KAHMP-troe-ler,” but the exact pronunciation listed for *controller*:

kun-TROE-ler

CONDOLENCE, NOUN. *An expression of sympathy, especially regarding a bereavement.*

Not “KAHN-duh-lunss.” All authorities accent the second syllable, which rhymes with *toe*:

kun-DOE-l'nss

CONNOISSEUR, NOUN. *A critical judge of a fine art, wine, or food.*

The prevalent mispronunciation “kahn-uh-SOO-er” has a decidedly unpleasant connotation. Weber and Fields, comedians of a former day, capitalized on this. Weber’s line: “I am a *common sewer* of beer,” was always good for a laugh.

Here is a safe rule to follow: the last syllable of French loan words ending in *-eur* (*amateur*, *hauteur*, *Pasteur*, *chauffeur*, *liqueur*, etc.) should be pronounced “er,” to rhyme with *her*, or sometimes “yoor,” to rhyme with *cure*; but never “ooer,” to rhyme with *sewer*.

First choice: kahn-i-SER

Second choice: kahn-i-SYOOR

CONSIGNEE

NOUN. *One to whom something is consigned.*

CONSIGNOR

NOUN. *One who consigns something.*

The two most frequently heard pronunciations, “kahn-sin-EE” and “kahn-sin-AWR,” are not listed in first place by the latest American authorities.

Correct pronunciations:

<i>consignee</i>	{	<i>first choice: KAHN-sy-NEE'</i>
		<i>second choice: KAHN-sin-EE'</i>
<i>consignor</i>	{	<i>first choice: kun-SY-ner</i>
		<i>second choice: KAHN-sy-NAWR'</i>
		<i>third choice: KAHN-sin-AWR'</i>

CONTRARY, ADJECTIVE. *Opposite; mutually opposed.*

The average person, without knowing why, will give two pronunciations to this word, depending on how it is used in the sentence. Read the following sentence aloud and see if it isn't natural to place the accents where the capital letters are shown: “On the CON-trary, I think the child is very con-TRAR-y.”

Some dictionaries do not show the second-syllable accent at all; others list it as dialectal or colloquial.

Mother Goose is responsible for having perpetuated the erroneous pronunciation “kahn-TRAIR-ee” in the nursery classic:

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?

Best usage places the accent on the first syllable in all meanings of the word:

KAHN-trair-ee

CONTUMELY, NOUN. *Insulting rudeness; haughty insolence.*

This word is not widely used, and usually is mispronounced by those who see it in print. Do not say "kun-TOOM-lee." Give the word four syllables and place the main accent on the first:

KAHN'-tyoo-MEE-lee

CONVERSANT, ADJECTIVE. *Acquainted with or accustomed to.*

Question: How should I pronounce the word *conversant*?

Answer: *First choice:* **KAHN-ver-s'nt**

Second choice: **kun-VER-s'nt**

CO-OPERATIVE

DECORATIVE

INITIATIVE

INTERPRETATIVE

There are in English several *-ative* words that are generally garbled by zealous but inept speakers who, instead of searching for guidance in the dictionary, learn their pronunciations by parroting the accents of friends or business associates, a practice that can lead only to frequent and embarrassing errors.

You will hear "KWAHP-ruh-tiv" on every hand, but you will not find it in the dictionary. Say:

koe-AHP'-er-AY-tiv

"DEK-ruh-tiv" is the especial darling of interior decorators, but you have never heard one call himself a "DEK-ruh-ter." Better say:

DEK'-oh-RAY-tiv

Initiative is a word of five syllables. The pronunciation in best usage is:

in-ISH'-ee-AY-tiv

Interpretative likewise has five syllables. Sound your "a" and say:

in-TER'-pree-TAY-tiv

Also, it is best to use the "ay" sound in *authoritative*, *speculative*, *imaginative*, *operative*: **aw-THAHR'-uh-TAY-**

tiv, SPEK'-yoo-LAY-tiv, im-ADGE'-in-AY-tiv, AHP'-er-AY-tiv. But in *comparative*, *conservative*, *demonstrative*, *superlative*, and *imperative*, only the second syllable is accented, and the "a" becomes obscured, as in *sofa*: kum-PAR-uh-tiv, kun-SER-vuh-tiv, dee-MAHN-struh-tiv, syoo-PER-luh-tiv, im-PAIR-uh-tiv.

For the correct pronunciation of words ending in *-ative* (and all other words, for that matter), there is nothing to guide us but a good, late-edition American dictionary.

Your book dealer stocks several reliable dictionaries, most of which are moderately priced, and he will be glad to show you those that should best suit your needs.

Beware of pocket, dime-store, bargain, premium, and other such catch-penny publications. As the Better Business Bureau says: "Investigate before you invest."

CORRAL, NOUN.

Question: Is the word *corral* of Spanish origin?

Answer: Yes. The Spanish dictionary defines it thus: "*Corral*: Small yard; poultry yard; playhouse; blank space in notebooks of students who have neglected a lecture." In the United States, a *corral* is "an enclosure for confining animals."

First choice: kuh-**RAL**

Second choice (Spanish): koe-**RAHL**

CORSAGE, NOUN. *The bodice of a dress; a bouquet to be worn on the dress.*

It is not generally known that there are two accepted pronunciations of *corsage*. Dictionary opinion is so divided, however, that it is hard to say which pronunciation is the better choice.

The word *corsage* is from the French, but it is now completely Anglicized in both pronunciation and meaning. It will shock many readers to learn that the French *corsage* has not the remotest connection with either flowers or bouquets, but comes from *corps*, "body," and means chiefly "the human bust," "the body from the neck to the waist." Picture, then, the astonishment of a Parisian *fleuriste* who

is asked by an American tourist to deliver a *corsage* to a young lady. "But, monsieur," the bewildered *fleuriste* is sure to protest, "Mademoiselle already has one. And besides, *mon dieu!* here we do not practice butchery; we sell ze flowers!"

The proper order would be for a *bouquet de corsage*, "a bouquet to be worn at the waist or elsewhere on the upper part of the body."

Some dictionaries pronounce *corsage* as "KAWR-sidge." But it never occurs in modern American usage, if, indeed, it was ever heard.

Correct pronunciation: kawr-SAHZH

Note: In French, *corsage* also means "waist," "bodice," "blouse" (*partie du vêtement de femme qui recouvre le buste*—*Larousse*).

COUP, NOUN. *A sudden stroke or stratagem.*

The French word *coup* must not be pronounced according to English values. "Koop" will be found in no American dictionary.

Coup d'état, "an unexpected measure of state," and *coup de grâce*, "a merciful blow," are not "koop dee EE-tat" and "koop dee GRAYSS." In *coup* the "p" is silent.

Correct pronunciations:

coup: koo

coup d'état: koo day-TAH

coup de grâce: koo duh GRAHSS

COUPON, NOUN. *A token or certificate.*

Of necessity, we borrowed this indispensable word from the French, for we have no equivalent in English. For example, without this word with which to describe a *coupon in an advertisement* (ad-VER-tiss-ment), we should find it necessary to resort to this circumlocution (the quotation is from *Webster's*): ". . . a part of a printed advertisement designed to be cut or torn off for use as an order blank or as a form for inquiry"!

The efficient and practical French do a much tidier job with a single word.

Let me explain why so few dictionaries sanction the commonly heard "KEW-pahn":

First, nearly all the *cou-* words in English have been borrowed from the French. In that language, *cou-* spells "koo," without a single exception.

Second, there is not a single word in the English language in which *cou-* rhymes with *few*, *pew*. *Cou-* may have the sound of "kow," as in *couch* and *count*; it may have the sound of "kaw," as in *cough*; it may have the sound of "kuh," as in *couple* and *cousin*; it may have the sound of "koe," as in *course* and *court*. But never does the combination of letters *cou-* have the "kew" sound of *kewpie*.

In the word *coupon*, as in *coup* (koo) and *coupé* (koo-PAY), *cou-* must rhyme with *coo*, *moo*, *woo*.

So, what do you say, America? Let us stop "KEW-pahning" all over the place and begin to give to this important and indispensable word the pronunciation that is historically correct.

All together, now, say:

KOO-pahn

COYOTE, NOUN. *A species of small wolf.*

This word is from the Aztec *coyotl*. The Mexican-Spanish pronunciation is "koe-YOE-tay." However, the word has become Anglicized, or, to use a more exact term, "Americanized."

The coyote, sometimes called *prairie wolf*, frequents the Western plains. It is more jackal-like than the wolf, and is smaller. Coyotes are skulking creatures that hunt in packs by night. They give voice to a hysterical yapping cry that is characteristic of no other animal.

Two American pronunciations are authorized. Both rhyme the first syllable with *by*, *my*; and not with *coy*, *toy*:

First choice: KY-ote

Second choice: ky-OH-tee

CREVASSE**CREVICE**

These words are so similar in meaning as to be virtually interchangeable, but in pronunciation they are quite unlike.

Crevasse, a word from the French, is accented on the second syllable:

kre-VASS

Crevice, a word of Middle English origin, is accented on the first syllable:

KREV-iss

RICH AS CROESUS

Yes, Croesus actually lived. He was the last King of Lydia, and his reign ended in the year 546 B.C.

So very rich was the ancient plutocrat that, for more than two thousand years, his name has stood for great or untold wealth.

It is said that the first gold coins in the world were minted in Lydia by King Croesus.

The name *Croesus* rhymes with *lease us*.

Correct pronunciation:

KREE-suss

CROIX DE GUERRE. *French military decoration.*

The popular (and erroneous) version of this French term is "kroy dee GURR." Also, *croix* is frequently mispronounced to rhyme with *stoics*.

Since 1915, the *croix de guerre* (literally "cross of war") has been awarded to French soldiers for bravery in action. The decoration is a bronze cross suspended by a green ribbon, striped with red. Belgium awards a similar medal, also called *croix de guerre*.

Many sounds in French cannot be indicated exactly by any known system of English phonetics. Therefore, the following pronunciation is to be regarded as only approximately correct.

In *croix*, the "oi" has the sound of "wah"; the "x" is silent. The vowel sound of *de* is similar to the obscure "a" (uh) of *sofa*. *Guerre* is a one-syllable word that rhymes with *fair*, *hair*.

KRWAH duh GAIR'

CUCKOO, NOUN. *A bird of northern Europe and Asia.*

The cuckoo is not the sweet and cheerful little lady we may suppose from having seen her effigy pop in and out of clocks.

By nature, she is an efficiency expert; at heart, she is a lazy, murderous wanton.

The cuckoo builds no nest. No; she finds the nest of some other bird, swoops down and lays a single egg among those of the absent mother. By this simple but fiendish ruse, she does away entirely with all housekeeping and maternal cares.

As soon as the baby cuckoo hatches, he pushes his foster brothers out of the nest, down to the last one. They die untended on the ground below while Junior Cuckoo waxes sleek and fat on the toothsome grubs and insects that are brought to him by the unsuspecting parents of the destroyed brood.

Thus we see that the cuckoo is a wolf in sheep's clothing. (And that is a muddled metaphor if ever one was penned. Perhaps "a vulture in dove's feathers" is closer to the truth.)

Now, why has the name of this coldly calculating bird been chosen as a slang word for *crazy*? If any bird is *coo-coo*, it is the foolish dupe that is betrayed to sacrifice its own young and its hope of posterity.

The slang word is spelled *coo-coo* and is pronounced "KOO-koo." The name of the bird is spelled *cuckoo*, and the first syllable is pronounced exactly like the word *cook*:

KŌOK-oo

CULINARY, ADJECTIVE. *Of or relating to cookery or the kitchen.*

Why "KULL-uh-nair-ee" is wrong will be easily apparent if we syllabicate the word, thus: *cu-li-nar-y*. The first syllable is not *cul-* to rhyme with *dull*; it is *cu-*, to rhyme with *few*. The only pronunciation authorized is:

KEW'-li-NAIR-ee

CUPOLA, NOUN. *A small dome on the top of a building or tower.*

Do not say "KEW-puh-loe," rhyming the third syllable with *toe*.

Note that the word is spelled, not *cupalo*, but *cupola*. Thus, in the average vocabulary, the "o" and "a" are transposed, though no one seems to know why. As one writer observes: "This is going to a lot of trouble to be wrong."

Be sure to rhyme the *second* syllable with *toe*:

KEW-poe-luh

DACHSHUND, NOUN. *A small dog of the hound family.*

The dachshund has a build unique;
You'd think him out of joint, sir.
He seems to take at least a week
To pass a given point, sir.

The *dachshund* (from the German *Dachs*, "badger," and *Hund*, "dog") has been valued as a working dog since the Middle Ages. It was bred with very short legs so that it could work its way easily into and out of fox and badger holes.

The dachshund is affectionate, playful, intelligent, and courageous. The sleek, short coat does not shed, and, as he does not have B. O., the queer little creature makes an ideal house dog.

He is a canine gentleman,
Of that there is no doubt, sir.
His *Mittel* sags a little, but
He's nice to have about, sir.

First choice: DAHKS-höönt
Second choice: DAKS-höönd
Third choice: DASH-hund
Fourth choice: DASH-und

DANISH, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to the Danes or Denmark.*

We frequently hear this word given as "DAN-nish" to rhyme with *mannish* and *clannish*, a pronunciation that no dictionary to my knowledge supports or even lists.

In the first syllable of *Danish*, use the long "a" (ay) sound of *Dane*, *gain*, *pain*:

DAY-nish

Note: Scandinavia, incidentally, is not a country. The name is a general term for the countries of North Europe: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, etc.

DEAF, ADJECTIVE. *Unable to perceive sounds.*

Do not say "deef" to rhyme with *beef*. (*Deaf-mute* also is better usage than *deaf and dumb*.)

In colonial days, and for many years afterward, "deef" was regarded as correct. Indeed, Noah Webster, in 1789, decried "deff" as a mannerism of those early Americans who affected the English style of speech. (The British were aped in those days, too.) Webster held that, since the long "e" (as in *see*) was correct in *leaf* and *sheaf*, it should also be correct in *deaf*.

But times and customs change, and so do pronunciations. "Deef" today is archaic and dialectical. The word should rhyme with *chef*, *clef*:

DEFF

Memory Verse

Shun him as you would a thief
Who says "I'm jest a leetle deaf."

DEBRIS, NOUN. *Rubbish; remains of something destroyed, as a building.*

Do not say "DEB-riss."

We have borrowed this word from the French, and have retained the Gallic spelling and meaning. The pronunciations in best usage in the United States, however, are more or less Anglicized, although the French pronunciation may quite properly be used.

In any event, the final "s" of *debris* must never be sounded:

First choice: deb-REE

Second choice: DEB-ree

Third choice (French): day-BREE

(See SHAMBLES, page 364.)

DECADENT, ADJECTIVE. *Deteriorating; decline or lowering of social or moral values.*

Question: Did you mark the pronunciation of the word

decadent by Mr. Roosevelt in a radio speech? He pronounced the word very distinctly "DEK-uh-d'nt." Was this a slip?

Answer: No. The pronunciation "DEK-uh-d'nt" is the second choice of most American dictionaries. Generally speaking, a second-choice pronunciation is one that is still used but that gradually is being superseded by the pronunciation first listed.

Decadence and *decadent* may be accented on either the first or the second syllable:

<i>decadence</i>	{	<i>first choice:</i> dee-KAY-d'nss
	{	<i>second choice:</i> DEK-uh-d'nss
<i>decadent</i>	{	<i>first choice:</i> dee-KAY-d'nt
	{	<i>second choice:</i> DEK-uh-d'nt

DECIBEL, NOUN. *The unit of sound measurement.*

A *decibel*, technically "one tenth of a bel," is the smallest change in sound intensity that is perceptible to the human ear. The average person cannot hear sounds of less than thirty decibels nor more than one hundred and thirty decibels.

The noise meter registers sounds in terms of decibels, much as a photographic exposure meter registers light and a thermometer registers heat. With 30 as the minimum and 130 as the maximum, the following readings give us a good understanding of sound intensities: ordinary conversation, 40 to 75; typewriter, 60; adding machine, 70; restaurant, 70; factory, 75; fire engine at 100 feet, 83; loud speaker on street, 87; automobile horn, 87; police whistle, 88; riveting, 92; pneumatic drill, 97; boiler factory, 97.

Accent the first syllable of *decibel*, which rhymes with *Bess*:

DESS-i-bell

DEFENSE, NOUN. *Protection from attack.*

Defense, and its antonym *offense*, should never be accented on the first syllable, sports broadcasters to the contrary notwithstanding. Avoid "DEE-fenss" and "AW-fenss" as vulgarisms.

These words may also be spelled *defence*, *offence*; *-fense*, however, is the better choice.

Correct pronunciations:

defense: dee-FENSS

offense: uh-FENSS

DE LUXE. *Elegant; sumptuous; luxurious.*

The French phrase *de luxe* has been so hackneyed by continual repetition in commercial "Americanese" that it has joined legions of other good expressions that now have virtually no meaning. Words often die of overwork.

The French meaning of *de luxe* is "excessively sumptuous," "very elaborate, especially as to clothes and food." But in the United States, anything may be "DEE luks": a nickel candy bar, a pair of chain-store rayon panties, a mail-order set of Dumas with "classy buckram binding," or a car with an extra cigarette lighter and a little more chromium trim than the "standard" model.

In America, *de luxe* started out as a synonym for *luxurious*. Today, if the phrase means anything at all, it simply designates something that is a little fancier than ordinary.

In pronunciation, *de luxe* is one hundred per cent American. But do not say "DEE luks." Place the accent on *luxe*, which is pronounced exactly as is the word *looks*:

First choice: dee LŌŌKS

Second choice (dubious): dee LUKS

DERBY, NOUN. *A stiff felt hat; a horse race.*

Question: Why do we hear *derby* pronounced "darby"?

Answer: Until a comparatively recent date, "e" before "r" almost always had the "ah" sound: *certain* was "sartin," *clergy* was "clargy," *servant* was "sarvant," *merchant* was "marchant."

The "ah" sound of "er" still survives in England in *derby* and *clerk*, pronounced "darby" and "clark."

The Derby, the annual race at Epsom, near London, is pronounced "darby." Our own Kentucky Derby, at Churchill Downs, Louisville, is properly pronounced with the "er" sound.

United States: DER-bee

England: DAHR-bee

Note: The word *sergeant* in England and the United States is still always pronounced "sargeant." The word *parson* originally was spelled "person"; the "e" was changed to "a" to conform to the pronunciation "parson," which to this day remains unchanged.

DES MOINES, PROPER NOUN. *Capital of the State of Iowa.*

The name *Des Moines* is French and means "of the friars or monks." The name is completely Anglicized. Do not attempt to give it the French pronunciation. Also, be sure to avoid the vulgarism "DEE-moinz." Both "s's" should be silent. *Des* is like the word *dub*, without the "b"; *Moines* rhymes with *coin*:

duh MOIN

DESPICABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Deserving to be despised.*

It is incorrect to accent this word on the second syllable: "dess-PIK-uh-b'l"; although, I must confess, this mispronunciation makes a stronger and more cutting epithet, especially when it is hurled defiantly from the lips of countless beleaguered heroines of the daytime radio serials: "I hate yoe! Yaw'r pehfectly dess-PIK-uh-b'l!"

It is not generally known that the word *despicable* is also entirely correct. Of the two, *despicable* appears to me to be the better and stronger word. *Despicable* means "despicable"; *despicable* means "despicable."

Despicable should be accented on the first syllable only; *despicable* is accented on the second syllable.

Correct pronunciations:

DESS-pik-uh-b'l
dee-SPIZE-uh-b'l

DETERIORATE, VERB. *To degenerate; to grow worse.*

Have you ever heard *deteriorate* pronounced otherwise than "dee-TEAR-ee-ait," to rhyme with "we fear he ate"? Likewise, *deterioration* is universally mispronounced "dee-TEAR-ee-AY'-shun," to rhyme with "the Erie Nation."

If we divide both words into syllables, a revelation, I am sure, is in store for most of us: *de-te-ri-o-rate*, *de-te-ri-o-ra-tion*.

What do we see? Three things are now apparent: (1) *deteriorate* has five syllables, not four; and *deterioration* has six syllables, not five. (2) In both words the "o" is clearly a syllable all to itself. (3) The last syllable of *deteriorate* and the fifth syllable of *deterioration* must begin with the letter "r," and not with the letter "a." In both cases, the second syllable rhymes with *fear*.

I should advise a little practice on these words to fix the sound of them firmly in the memory. Refer to this article often. Repeat the correct pronunciations over and over until, with no mental effort, you can come right out with:

deteriorate: dee-TEAR-ee-oh-raiit
deterioration: dee-TEAR-ee-oh-RAY'-shun

DEUTSCHLAND, PROPER NOUN. *Germany*.

Deutschland is the correct German name for the country of Germany. Do not say "DUTCH-land" nor "DOOCH-land."

Deutsch- has the vowel sound of *boy*, *toy*; the "a" in *-land* is "ah"; the final "d" is pronounced "t":

DOYCH-lahnt

DIARY, NOUN. *A daily record of personal events.*

Do you keep a "DY-ree?"

Sorry, the word *diary* has three syllables. The "a," which forms the second, is obscured, as in *sofa*:

DY-uh-ree

Note: Do not confuse *diary* with *dairy*, a word which has to do with cows and milk products. Also, *dairy* is not "DAY-ree" but "DAIR-ree," the first syllable rhyming with *fair*, *hair*, *pair*.

DICTATOR, NOUN. *One who has supreme authority.*

Most of the older dictionaries do not list *dictator* with the first-syllable accented, as "DIK-tay-ter." They show only "dik-TAY-ter," a pronunciation favored by the late Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, the first-syllable accent widely prevails in American usage, and it now has ample dictionary support.

First choice: DIK-tay-ter
Second choice: dik-TAY-ter

Note: Other *-ator* words that should be accented on the second syllable are: *creator* (kree-AY-ter), *curator* (kew-RAY-ter), *equator* (ee-KWAY-ter), *spectator* (spek-TAY-ter), and *testator* (tess-TAY-ter).

The *-or* ending of these words must never rhyme with *bore*, *core*, as "DIK-tay-tore." The only correct rhyme is with *her*, *per*.

(See AMBASSADOR, page 42.)

DICTIONARY, NOUN. *An alphabetic vocabulary with definitions.*

Question: Our oversmart high-school children are driving us mad trying to make three-syllable words of *dictionary*, *military*, *secretary*, *stationary*. And they are aided and abetted by their teachers!

Answer: The telescoping of various familiar words ending in *-ary* and *-ery* is a British linguistic trait that has been embraced by many (far too many!) American Anglophiles, who proceed under the erroneous belief that there is something uncouth and pernicious in the standard speech of the United States. They imagine that the last word in languorous super-elegance lies in aping the British accent. Other and wiser speakers shun any form of affectation. They desire neither to be regarded as "upstage," nor to be mistaken for aliens.

The American public is most intolerant of posturing and affectation in any form. Perhaps the slipping in popularity recently of a number of motion-picture stars may be traced to their attempts on the radio and screen to palm themselves off on their homefolks as *pukka sahibs*. This may be something for Hollywood to ponder.

It should be emphasized again that British-English and American-English were divorced in colonial days and have snubbed each other ever since. (See BRITICISM, page 67.)

Such Briticisms as "DIK-shun-ree," "SEK-ruh-tree," "MILL-i-tree," "STAY-shun-ree" have no sanction in American usage. And even those who ape the British do not telescope all the *-ary* words. For truly laughable results, try giving the cheerio twist to *literary*, *arbitrary*, *adversary*, *centenary*, *dromedary*, *January*, *February*!

Modern American dictionaries place a secondary accent on the third, or *-ar*, syllable of such words. The *-ar* is plainly marked to rhyme with the first syllable of *error*, *errand*, a good rhyme for *air*, *hair*, *pair*; not the "er" of *her*, *per*.

Correct pronunciation:

dictionary: DIK'-shun-AIR-ee

military: MILL'-uh-TAIR-ee

secretary: SEK'-ree-TAIR-ee

stationary: STAY'-shun-AIR-ee

(See SECRETARY, page 228.)

Though my calling's sedentary,
Quiet, peaceful, literary,
Oftentimes my mood will vary;
For a madness temporary,
Makes me warlike, sanguinary,
When I hear some dignitary,
British-aping functionary,
Call a simple dictionary
A "DIK-shun-ree."

Oh, why is it necessary,
In this land of mount and prairie,
To affect an arbitrary
British accent? I am wary
Of the newscast luminary,
Native-born and ordinary,
Who pronounces military
As "MILL-i-tree."

Life is only temporary;
Death is sure, hereditary.
When I die, as customary,
Find for me a sanctuary,
Far removed and solitary,
Where this weary visionary
Will rest in a cemetery . . .
Not a "SEM-i-tree."

DIGEST

NOUN. *A compilation of written matter.*

VERB. *To assimilate.*

Careful speakers will mark well the difference in pronunciation between the noun and the verb. Never say: "The food is easy to 'DY-jest,'" or speak of reading "*The Readers' di-JEST*."

These two mistakes are not uncommon, even in lofty circles, but it is my observation that they are less frequently heard than in the last decade (DEK-aid).

When you speak of classified written matter or a magazine, use the long "i" sound, as in *dye*, and accent the first syllable. When you mean the digestion of food, use the short "i" sound, as in *did*, and accent the second syllable:

Noun: DY-jest

Verb: di-JEST

DILATE, VERB. *To expand; to enlarge.*

"When Junior had his eyes examined, they had to 'DY-lait' his pupils."

No. The words *dilate*, *dilated*, and *dilation* must never be accented on the first syllable, as any good dictionary will attest.

(Incidentally, since I have mentioned the dictionaries, I should like to point out that it is not the purpose of this book to dictate but to *record* good usage as it is found in the accepted authorities. No recommendation ever appears here that does not have the sanction of the majority of the reputable dictionaries.)

In the case of *dilate*, the first syllable accent is as erroneous as "DE-troit," "PO-lice," "HO-tel," "DE-fense," "OFF-ense," "AD-mit," "DI-rect," "FI-nance," "I-dear (for *idea*)," and "E-vent."

Careful speakers will make sure that the accents in these and similar words are not misplaced.

First choice: dy-LAIT

Second choice: dil-LAIT

DIPHTHONG
NAPHTHA
DIPHThERIA

Before we proceed, will you please say these three words aloud?—Thank you.

Did you say: “DIP-thawng,” “NAP-thuh,” “dip-THEAR-ee-uh?” You are one in ten thousand if you did not. These mispronunciations have been popularized by constant repetition, yet one needs but a second glance at the spelling to see that “ph” in the first syllable of each word must take the sound of “f,” as in *photograph*.

Correct pronunciations:

diphthong: DIF-thawng

naphtha: NAF-thuh

diphtheria: dif-THEE-ri-uh

Note: The second syllable of *diph-the-ri-a* is “thee,” as in *theme*.

DIRECT

VERB. *To order, rule.*

ADJECTIVE. *Immediate, straightforward.*

Not “DYE-rekt.” Use the obscure “i” in the first syllable, and accent the second in *direct*, *direction*, and *director*:

direct: duh-REKT

direction: duh-REK-shun

director: duh-REK-ter

DIRIGIBLE, NOUN. *An aircraft lighter than air.*

Not “duh-RIDGE-uh-b’l.” Place the accent on the first syllable, which rhymes with *hear*, *fear*, *tear*:

DEAR-idge-uh-b’l

DISHABILLE, NOUN. *In a state of undress; a loose negligee.*

Do not allow the spelling *dish-* to lead you to voice the common mispronunciation “DISH-uh-bill.” The word is correctly syllabicated thus: *dis-ha-bille*. Hence, it is plain that the first syllable is “dis” and not “dish.”

This French word is now Anglicized. Accent the third syllable, which rhymes with *feel*:

diss-uh-BEEL

DIVA, NOUN. *The leading woman singer; prima donna.*

Not "DY-vuh."

The "i" in this Italian word has the long sound of "e"; the "a" obscured as in *sofa*:

DEE-vuh

DIVAN, NOUN. *A couch; a council of state.*

Divan has two pronunciations. When the word is used in the meaning of "a piece of furniture," the first syllable is accented and rhymes with *dye*, *rye*:

DY-van

If "a council of state" is meant, like the Divan of the Masonic Shrine, the "i" is short, as in *did*, and the accent shifts to the second syllable:

di-VAN

DOCILE, ADJECTIVE. *Tractable; easily controlled; gentle.*

Not "DOE-sile," which is a Britishism.

The "o" has the sound of "ah"; the "i" is short, as in *fill*, *still*:

DAH-sill

DON'T BE A MUMBLER

One of the most prevalent bad speech habits in the United States is the mumbled telescoping of many words of two or more syllables.

These slovenly and unlovely examples are to be found in the vocabularies of far too many educated speakers: "an-yul" for *annual*; "curnt" for *current*; "forn" for *foreign*; "fam-ly" for *family*; "pop-lar" for *popular*; "ornge" for *orange*; "mem-ry" for *memory*; "gen-ral" for *general*; "forst" for *forest*; "gal-ry" for *gallery*; "di-mond" for *diamond*.

There are hundreds of such familiar words. Do not mumble them if you value correct speech. Practice the correct pronunciations aloud until they are firmly fixed in your vocabulary. Be sure to say:

annual: **AN-yoo-ul**

current: **KER-ent**

foreign: **FAH-rin**

family: FAM-i-lee
 popular: POP-yoo-ler
 orange: AHR-enj
 memory: MEM-oh-ree
 general: JEN-er-ul
 forest: FAH-rest
 gallery: GAL-ler-ee
 diamond: DY-uh-mund

DOUR SCOTSMAN

The phrase *dour Scotsman* is familiar to almost everyone, but the word Scotsman is seldom heard pronounced correctly in the United States.

Dour means "obstinate; sullen; gloomy." Strictly speaking, *dour* should rhyme with *moor*, *tour*. But most Americans say "dower" to rhyme with *power*.

Scotsman (note the spelling): The Scots themselves prefer this spelling to the familiar "Scotchman." The first syllable should rhyme with *cots*, not with *botch*.

dower or DOO-er SKOTS-mun

-DOUS

Question: I am told that *tremendous*, *stupendous*, *horrendous*, and *hazardous* are the only words in English ending in *-dous*. Can you name any others?

Answer: I know of several:

decapodous	ligniperdous
frondous	molybdous
gastropodous	nefandous
heteropodous	niggardous
hybridous	nodous
isopodous	timidous
jeopardous	tylopodous

vanadous

There doubtless are many more, since the suffix *-ous*, from the Latin *-osus*, can be used in adapting many Latin adjectives ending in *-us* and Greek adjectives ending in *-os*.

DRAMA, NOUN. *A dramatic play or story; a dramatic event.*

The dictionaries agree that it is best choice to use the "ah" sound in the first syllable of *drama*. However, most author-

ities also sanction the flat “a” of *ham*. But no dictionary authorizes the frequently heard “DRAM-mer” and “DRAY-muh.”

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: **DRAH-muh**

Second choice: **DRAM-uh**

Note: Do not use the “ah” sound in *dramatic*, *dramatist*, *dramatize*; say: druH-MAT-ik, DRAM-uh-tist, DRAM-uh-tize.

The phrase *dramatis personae* (“cast of characters in a play”) has an unusual origin: It seems that the distance between audience and players in the vast outdoor theaters of ancient Greece and Rome was so great that large and exaggerated masks (*personae*) were worn, so that the characters of the play could be recognized. The masks also served to magnify the voices of the players.

As the Latin word for mask is *persona* (plural *personae*), we see that the word *person* originally meant, not an individual human being, but a mask used in a play. The literal meaning of *dramatis personae*, then, is “the masks of the drama.”

It is pronounced:

DRAM-uh-tiss per-SOE-nee

(See THEATER, page 242.)

DROWNED, VERB. *Past tense of the verb “to drown.”*

It should be noted that the word is spelled *drown-e-d*, not *drown-d-e-d*.

Correct pronunciation:

drownd

Memory Verse

Let the speaker be confounded
Who declares “I almost ‘drown-ded.’”
Honor him and have him crowned
Who correctly calls it “drowned.”

DUTY, NOUN. *That which one ought to do.*

Say “Do your duty” rapidly a few times. Unless you are the exception, you will have pronounced this simple but important word “DOO-dee.”

In *committee*, *pretty*, *city*, *knotty*, *cattle*, and many such words, the “t’s” usually become “d’s”: “kuh-MID-dee,” “PRID-dee,” “SID-dee,” “NAHD-dee,” “KAD-d’l.” This is a bad speech habit that needs watching, especially in any form of public speaking.

In the first syllable of *duty*, use the long “u” sound of *beauty*, or the “oo” sound of *booty*:

DYOO-tee or DOO-tee

ECONOMICS, NOUN. *The science of the production of wealth.*

Economics has two authorized pronunciations. The first and better choice gives to the initial “e” the long sound, as in *seek*. In the second syllable, the “o” is long, as in *toe*:

First choice: EE-koe-NAHM’-iks

Second choice: EK-oh-NAHM’-iks

Note also:

economic: EE-koe-NAHM’-ik

economist: ee-KAHN-oh-mist

economize: ee-KAHN-oh-mize

economy: ee-KAHN-oh-mee

EGG, NOUN. *The reproductive ovum of a bird or reptile.*

Few words in common use are so frequently mispronounced. Do not say “aig,” to rhyme with *Hague*, *vague*. Likewise, the word *leg* should not be “laig.”

It is noteworthy that the average speaker will mispronounce *egg*, *leg*, *keg*, and *yegg* as “aig,” “laig,” “kaig,” and “yaig,” but will use the correct short “ë,” as in *regulate*, in the words *beg*, *peg*, and *nutmeg*. Apparently, there is no explanation for this peculiarity in pronunciation.

But we must remember that the correct vowel sound is the short “ë” sound of *regular*, *regulate*:

eg

EGRET, NOUN. *A kind of pure-white heron.*

The name of this bird should not rhyme with *regret*; nor should it be confused with the word *aigrette*.

The bird (*egret*) bears long, silky plumes (*aigrettes*) on the

lower back during the breeding season. As these were highly valued as ornaments, plume hunters slaughtered the adult birds in great numbers, leaving the young to perish.

Early extinction of the egret was threatened, but protective legislation, sponsored by Audubon Societies, brought an end to the depredations of the plume hunters. The number of egrets is now increasing steadily.

Correct pronunciations:

egret: EE-gret

aigrette: ay-GRET

EITHER

“EYE-ther” is more prevalent in England. In America, it is generally regarded as an affectation.

First choice: EE-ther

Second choice (dubious): EYE-ther

(See NEITHER, page 186, for a discussion of “EE-ther—EYE-ther, NEE-ther—NY-ther.”)

ELECTORAL, ADJECTIVE. *Pertaining to electors.*

Every four years, when the Presidential race is in the spotlight, the word *electoral* assumes great importance in the American vocabulary as an adjective describing the specific votes (of the so-called “Electoral College”) by which the chief executive is elected.

Scores of readers complain that many “gentlemen of the radio” insert an extra and unauthorized syllable in the word by pronouncing it “ee-lek-TOE-ree-ul.”

“Do something about this,” I am beseeched.

Very well, I shall.

The word *electoral* has but four syllables; the accent falls upon the second, thus:

ee-LEK-ter-ul

Note: The third syllable is not “toe”; it is “ter,” to rhyme with *her*.

But . . . prepare for a shock, precisionists: in at least one high authority, the new *Webster's*, I find the word *electorial* also listed as a legitimate adjective meaning *electoral*! The pronunciation is: “ee-lek-TOE-ree-ul.”

Therefore, when the gentlemen of the radio give voice to *electorial* in their commentations, who among us can prove that the word was not so written in the "script" from which they read?

ELECTRICALLY, ADVERB. *Pertaining to electricity.*

Should *electrically* be pronounced "e-lek-tri-kee"? Yes, according to virtually all radio announcers. No, emphatically, according to every dictionary of the English language between whose covers I have ever delved.

There are scores of familiar adverbs ending in *-ally*. Our ears are so used to the telescopic "ethi-kee," "radi-kee," "logi-kee," "musi-kee," "physi-kee," "patheti-kee," etc., that the correct *-cal-ly* (two distinct syllables) has a strange and foreign sound.

Correct pronunciation:

ee-LEK-tri-kuh-lee

I sing of the announcer who,
Although he's coaxed and bribed,
Will still repeat: "This program is
E-lec-tri-kee transcribed."

It's "phy-si-kee" and "mu-si-kee,"
Though hooted at and gibed.
His voice comes through: "Our music is
E-lec-tri-kee transcribed."

Why "prac-ti-kee, dra-ma-ti-kee"?
Is "kee" by law prescribed?
Ah, heavens! Must it *always* be
"E-lec-tri-kee transcribed"?

L'envoi

The poor announcer passed away;
His headstone is inscribed:
"The music at the service was
E-lec-tri-kee transcribed."

Note: An electrical transcription is a recording made expressly for radio broadcasting.

ELITE, NOUN. *The socially superior.*

The word *elite*, a popular American name for cafés and theaters, and used to designate a ten-point typewriter type, comes to us from the French, unchanged in spelling, meaning, and pronunciation; but the correct pronunciation is not as the word is usually heard: "EE-lite."

How to use the word: "He is one of the *elite*. They are of the *elite* of society. This typewriter has *elite* type."

The first syllable rhymes with *bay*, *day*. The second syllable, which receives the accent, rhymes with *beet*, *meet*:

ay-LEET

EMPLOYEE, NOUN. *One who works for another.*

A check of the five accepted American dictionaries shows that "em-PLOY-ee" is listed by only one, *Webster's*, as second choice.

The accent should fall upon the third syllable, as:

First choice: em-ploy-EE

Second choice: em-PLOY-ee

Note: There is some confusion as to the spelling of the word. Many readers have asked: "Should it be *employe* or *employee*? Best American usage is *employee*. In France, *employé* is masculine; *employée* is feminine. This distinction is not observed in the United States.

ENSEMBLE, NOUN. *All the parts taken together.*

This indispensable French word has been in the English vocabulary for many years, yet it is only partly Anglicized in pronunciation. If the word were completely Anglicized, it would be pronounced according to English rules, thus: "en-SEM-b'l." But no dictionary lists such a pronunciation.

(*Note:* Broadcasters frequently attempt to give the word its French values, saying: "ah-SAHM." This might be Chinese, but it isn't. Nor is it French.)

The pronunciation shown as first choice by the leading American dictionaries is somewhat similar to the French, but without the French nasal "n" in the first and second syllables:

ahn-SAHM-b'l

ENVELOPE, NOUN. *A folded and gummed paper in which letters are enclosed.*

Do you say "AHN-vuh-lope"? Almost everyone does, but a careful check of five American dictionaries—*Century*, *Funk and Wagnall's*, *Macmillan's*, *Winston's*, and *Webster's*—shows that "AHN-vuh-lope" is not listed at all in the first four, and that *Webster's* lists it as second choice. Moreover, "AHN-vuh-lope" is not to be found in the great British authority, the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

The prefix *en-* occurs chiefly in French words, hundreds of which are now in the English language, *viz.*: *entrance*, *engage*, *engine*, *enemy*. It would be quite absurd to attempt to give a French twist to the first syllable, as: "ahntrance," "ahngage," "ahngine," "ahnemy." Why, then, such contortions as "AHN-vuh-lope" and "AHN-voy"? (See ENVOY, page 111.)

"AHN-vuh-lope" appears to be a survival of those dear old basque-and-bustle days of the last century when it was considered quite elegant to lard one's speech heavily with words and phrases from the French.

But "AHN-vuh-lope," as heard in the United States, is anything but French. In France, the word is spelled *envelope*; in pronunciation, it has but two syllables, the first being strongly nasalized and the second receiving the accent. As nearly as it can be spelled phonetically, the French pronunciation is "ah(n)-VLUP."

The *Oxford*, *Century*, and *Macmillan* dictionaries show as second choice the pronunciation with the French nasal "n." But the first choice of all dictionaries rhymes the *en-* of *envelope* with *men*, *hen*, *pen*:

EN-vel-o-pe

ENVOY, NOUN. *A government representative next in rank below an ambassador.*

Ever since the word *envoy* was promoted to front-page rank among the ominous words of war, the hardy perennials of the newscasts demonstrate the accuracy of their "French" by pronouncing *envoy* either "AHN-voy" or "AHNG-voy."

The truth is, *envoy* is an English word and must be pronounced according to English rules. The first syllable rhymes

with *hen*, *men*. "AHN-voy" and "AHNG-voy" are neither English nor French. They are mongrel pronunciations that careful speakers will avoid. The only correct pronunciation is:

EN-voy

Note: If the urge for elegant "diction" demands a more plush-lined word than *envoy*, one may use the French *envoyé*, making sure, however, that the word has three syllables and a strongly nasalized "n":

ah(n)-vwah-YAY

EPICUREAN, NOUN. *One who is given to luxury; one who is choice in the enjoyment of food and drink.*

Although the name *Epicurus*, from which this word derives, is accented on the third, or *-cu*- syllable, *epicurean* should not be so accented.

Epicurus (341 to 270 B.C.) was a noted Greek philosopher, a writer and teacher who was revered for his kindliness and love of pleasure. He wrote: "We declare pleasure to be the beginning and end of the blessed life."

Epicurean should not be pronounced "ep-i-KEW-ree-un." The accents fall on the first and fourth syllables:

EP-i-kew-REE'-un

EPITOME, NOUN. *A summary; a typical part.*

Epitome is not only widely mispronounced "EP-uh-tome," but it also is generally misused as to meaning.

Do not say: "She is the epitome of loveliness; he is the epitome of courtesy." The correct word in these sentences is *acme* (AK-mee), "the top or highest point," "culmination."

Epitome is a prosaic word that means "a summary or abridgment of a topic or work," "a part that is typical of the whole."

How to use the word: "This review is an *epitome* (a brief summary) of the novel. This custom is an *epitome* (one of the typical customs) of life in the old South."

Epitome is a four-syllable word. Accent the second syllable:

ee-PIT-oh-mee

EPIZOOTIC, ADJECTIVE AND NOUN. *Affecting many animals at one time.*

Honestly, now, haven't you often declared humorously: "I've got the ep-i-ZOO-tic?" You cannot properly use the word *epizootic* in any way as applying to a human being.

For many years, the impression has been that *epizootic* is either a nonsense term for an unnamed comedy illness or the name of a disease afflicting horses. No less a word master than H. L. Mencken used the word in the latter sense in "The Downfall of a Revolutionary," in *Esquire* (September, 1940), by referring to ". . . my father's horse, John, *who* (sic) was laid up with epizootic."

The fact is, the word names neither a disease nor a specific illness. An *epizootic* (from the Greek *epi-*, "among," and *zoon*, "animals") is to animals what an *epidemic* (*epi-* plus *demos*, "people") is to human beings. The word means "a scourge occurring among many animals."

Since *epidemic* means "a disease afflicting many people," it is incorrect to say: "There is an *epidemic* among the cattle." The correct form is: "There is an *epizootic* among the cattle."

To say that a horse is laid up with epizootic is as absurd as it would be to say: "Johnson is laid up with epidemic."

Epizootic is a five-syllable word:

EP-i-zoe-AH'-tik

E PLURIBUS UNUM, LATIN. *One composed of many.*

This Latin phrase is the motto of the United States. It appears on the national arms and on most of the nation's coins.

In 1776, the Continental Congress instructed the President to adopt a national seal, and *e pluribus unum* was the motto selected.

The earliest known use of the phrase is in Virgil's *Moretum*: "*Color est e pluribus unus.*"

Correct pronunciation:

ee PLOO-ri-buss YOO-num

ERA, NOUN. *A period of time; an epoch.*

In the average vocabulary, *era*, *error*, and *arrow* are as alike in pronunciation as three peas in a pod. When your

minister speaks of "the Christian 'AIR-uh,'" he could mean the time since the birth of Christ, a mistake made by Christians, or a Christian weapon to be shot from a bow.

The second syllable of *error* is "er," not "uh." The second syllable of *arrow* is "oh," not "uh." *Era* should have the long "e" of *feed*, not the short "e" of *fed*:

EE-ruh

Note: Also, be sure to use the long "e" in *series*, *fetish*, and *lethal*:

SEE-reez, FEE-tish, LEE-th'l

(See **ARROW**, page 49.)

ERR, VERB. *To fall into error; to go astray.*

Although the verb *err* and the noun *error* are from the same Latin word (*errare*), *err* should not be pronounced like the first syllable of *error*. Do not say: "It is human to 'air,'" nor speak of an "airing" son or daughter.

Properly pronounced, *err* rhymes with *fur*, *her*, *per*:

er

ERSATZ, GERMAN NOUN. *Substitution; synthetic.*

In Germany, *Ersatz* is used to designate materials, foods, and commodities that are synthetic or largely composed of substitutes.

Accent the second syllable:

air-ZAHTS

ESPLANADE, NOUN. *A clear space between two strips of roadway.*

Do not say "ESS-pluh-nahd."

Most dictionaries do not show an "ah" sound in the third syllable, even as second choice.

In such words as *cavalcade*, *cannonade*, *escapade*, first choice rhymes -ade with *made*, *grade*, not with *odd*, *nod*. The word *promenade*, however, is an exception, the third syllable being "ahd" in the first-choice pronunciation.

Whether you prefer "aid" or "ahd," be sure to accent the third syllable in *esplanade*, not the first.

First choice: ess-pluh-NAID

Second choice: ess-pluh-NAHD

ESQUIRE, NOUN. *A title of respect.*

Question: Where does the accent fall in *esquire*?

Answer: Not "ESS-kwire." Accent the second syllable:
ess-KWIRE

ETIQUETTE, NOUN. *Correct social custom.*

Not "ET-uh-kat."

The original meaning of the French word *étiquette* (ay-tee-KET) was: "A small ticket or tag placed on sacks, bottles, or bales of merchandise, to indicate the contents, the price, etc." ("*Petit écriteau qu'on met sur les sacs, les fioles, les marchandises, pour en indiquer le contenu, le prix, etc.*") Hence, by extension: "the label of genuineness," "the sign of good quality," "the standard by which a thing is judged," "the form required for correctness."

Correct pronunciation:

ET-i-ket

EUROPE, PROPER NOUN. *The nations of Europe; the European continent.*

Europe and *European* are seldom heard correctly pronounced. I have never seen a dictionary that lists America's favorite mispronunciations: "YERP" and "yer-PEEN."

Attention, broadcasters! *Europe* has two syllables: the first is exactly like the word *you*; the second rhymes with *cup*. *European* has four syllables; each must be distinctly voiced:

Europe: YOO-rup

European: YOO-roe-PEE'-un

EUSTACHIAN TUBE. *A tube of the middle ear.*

Not "you station toob."

Eustachian is a word of four syllables. The "ch" has the sound of "k":

yoo-STAY-kee-un tyoob

EVENING, NOUN. *Latter part of the day.*

It is noted that some broadcasters, in their strivings for better "diction," pronounce the noun *evening* as a three-

syllable word: “EE-ven-ing.” The word *business*, too, is often converted from two to three syllables, as “BIZ-ee-ness.” It has been repeatedly pointed out that being guided in pronunciation by the spelling of words results inevitably in ridiculous and embarrassing blunders. “EE-ven-ing” and “BIZ-ee-ness” make alphabet soup out of two very necessary words.

Such mispronunciations usually are the mark of the announcing tyro, but these two particular errors are frequently voiced by seasoned broadcasters.

(Note: The verb *evening*, meaning “to make even,” is properly a three-syllable word, but no dictionary lists the noun *evening* with more than two syllables.)

Correct pronunciations:

evening (noun): **EEV-ning**

evening (verb): **EE-ven-ing**

business (noun): **BIZ-ness**

EXPERIMENT, NOUN. *A trial or test.*

Do not say “ek-SPEAR-uh-m’nt.”

If we turn to the dictionary, we find that the second syllable (*-per-*) is marked to rhyme with the *er-* of *error*, *errand*, *errant*. The breve over the “ë” (a little mark like a crescent, with the horns pointing upward) makes the *-per-* syllable rhyme approximately with *air*, *fair*, *pair*.

(Note: One should not speak of “trying an experiment,” since an experiment is a trial. Experiments are made or conducted.)

Skeptical readers will neigh

With merriment,

When they are told they should say:

Eks-PAIR-uh-m’nt.

Likewise, the second syllable of *sincerity* is not “sear” as: “sin-SEAR-uh-tee.” It, too, must rhyme with *air*, *hair*, *fair*.

Correct pronunciations:

experiment: **eks-PAIR-uh-m’nt**

sincerity: **sin-PAIR-uh-tee**

EXQUISITE, ADJECTIVE. *Highly perfected; consummate.*

In *exquisite*, as in *eczema* and *exigency*, the accent must fall on the first syllable only. Never say: "eks-KWIZ-it," "ek-ZEE-muh," "ek-SIDGE-en-see."

Correct pronunciations:

exquisite: EKS-kwi-zit

eczema: EK-see-muh

exigency: EK-si-jen-see

Memory Verse

When gunmen prowl and shoot and kill,
The press will emphasize
By means of "X" the spot on which
The victim's body lies.

In these three words, we must be sure
To watch our careless drawl,
And use the "EX" to mark the spot
Where accents are to fall.

EXTRA, ADJECTIVE AND NOUN. *Additional, more than ordinary.*

It is estimated that about one person in every three habitually voices the erroneous and dialectal pronunciation "EKS-tree," but this pronunciation will be found in no accepted dictionary.

The second syllable of *extra* must have the obscure sound ("uh"), as the "a" of *sofa*:

EKS-truh

EXTRAORDINARY, ADJECTIVE. *Not usual, customary, regular, or ordinary.*

This word is heard most often as "extra-OR-dinary," but that pronunciation is listed in only four out of eight dictionaries consulted, and has the rank of second choice.

The prevailing British pronunciation is something like this: "iks-STRAWR-d'n-ree."

As a general thing, the English custom of telescoping is frowned upon by American authorities. In this, I heartily concur. But in the case of *extraordinary*, the telescoping of

the *-tra-* and *-or-* syllables to form “*tror*” is desirable for clearness of meaning. For example, to speak of something as being “extra OR-dinary” might well convey the opposite meaning: “very ordinary,” “more ordinary than usual.”

The first-choice pronunciation shown below makes it clear that *extraordinary* is the word intended, and not the phrase *extra ordinary*.

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: ex-TRAWR'-di-NAIR-ee

Second choice: eks-truh-AWR-di-nair-ee

FAÇADE, NOUN. *The front of a building.*

Façade is a pretty badly manhandled word. Some of the most common mispronunciations are: “fak-AID,” “fuss-AID,” “FASS-aid,” and, as broadcast recently by the postmaster of a large Eastern city: “FAY-kaid.”

The word is French and it retains much of the French flavor. The “a” in the first syllable is either obscure, as in *sofa*, or short, as in *fascinate*. The “c” has the sound of “s.” Use the “ah” sound in the second syllable.

First choice: fuh-SAHd

Second choice: fa-SAHd

FACETIOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to a jesting manner; characterized by unseemly levity.*

Do not say “FAY-shus” or “fay-SEE-tus.”

Facetious is from *facetius*, a Latin word meaning “elegant,” “fine”; therefore, *facetious* originally meant “polished,” “pleasant,” “agreeable.” But best usage today gives to the word a somewhat different meaning, as will be seen from the definition at the top of this article.

How to use the word: “He is genuinely witty, but at times his *facetious* comments are in poor taste.”

Note that the “a” in the first syllable has the obscure (uh) sound, as in *sofa*:

fuh-SEE-shus

Question: I have been told that *facetious* is the only word in English that contains all the vowels in the order “a,” “e,” “i,” “o,” “u.” Is this correct?

Answer: As I know of three others—*abstentious*, *arterious*, and *bacterious*—there must be several more. If any reader knows of one, I should like to hear from him.

FACILE, ADJECTIVE. *Yielding; ready; quick; fluent.*

Not “FAY-sile” to rhyme with *May style*. This word is a fair rhyme for *castle*. Say:

FASS-ill

FACSIMILE, NOUN. *An exact copy; a duplicate; a reproduction.*

Although the radio-contest phrase “reasonably exact facsimile” has made this a fairly familiar word, it is not unusual to hear it mispronounced: “FAK'-suh-MILE.”

The word has four syllables, and the second syllable is accented:

fak-SIM-uh-lee

FACULTY, NOUN. *Mental endowment; the teaching staff of a school.*

A network announcer of more than average ability has often been heard to say “FAK-yool-tee,” a pronunciation not to be found in any dictionary.

The second syllable must rhyme with *dull*, *gull*:

FAK-ull-tee

FAKIR, NOUN. *A yogi; a worker of wonders.*

This word has no connection with *fake*. It is from the Arabic *fagir*, meaning “poor.”

The pronunciation in best usage accents the second syllable, which rhymes with *fear*, *hear*.

First choice: fuh-KEAR

Second choice: FAY-ker

FATIMA, PROPER NOUN. *A feminine name of Arabic origin.*

Here is a real surprise word. The popular pronunciation “fuh-TEE-muh” is entirely erroneous!

But don't take my word for it: here is the proof: The pronunciation prevalent in the United States is not authorized

by these dictionaries: the new *Webster's*, *Winston's*, *Macmillan's*, the *Century*, *Funk and Wagnalls'*, the *Jones*, and the *Oxford*.

Two pronunciations are sanctioned. The first choice is the Arabian form, in which the "a" in the first and third syllables is broad (ah), as in *father*. The first syllable only is accented.

The second choice is the Anglicized version. The first syllable rhymes with *bat*, *mat*; the "i" is short, as in *bit*; the "a" in the third syllable is the obscure "a" (uh) of *sofa*. The accent falls on the first syllable.

Try these pronunciations on your favorite cigarette salesman:

First choice: FAH-tee-mah

Second choice: FAT-i-muh

FAUX PAS, FRENCH. *A false step; an offense against social custom.*

This phrase from the French is very familiar in print, but most of us hesitate to use it in conversation, feeling instinctively that "fox pass" is quite nonsensical.

Fortunately (unlike most French words), the correct pronunciation of *faux pas* can be given almost exactly by English phonetics. So, if you have hesitated to use this expression, hesitate no longer.

Faux is identical with the English word *foe*; do not pronounce the "x". *Pas* rhymes approximately with *bah*; do not pronounce the "s":

foe PAH

FEBRUARY, NOUN. *The second month of the year.*

Do not say "feb-uh-wair-ee" or "feb-yoo-wair-ee."

Originally, February was the last month of the year. In the reign of Numa Pompilius, King of Rome (715 to 672 B.C.), two months were added to the Roman calendar of ten months; January at the beginning, February at the end. Later, February was placed immediately following January.

The name is from the Latin *Februarius*, "feast of purification."

Note the spelling of the second syllable, *-ru-*; it should have the “ō” sound of *rook*. Be sure to pronounce the “r.” Accent the first and third syllables.

FEB'-rōō-AIR-ee

FIANCÉ, NOUN. *A person who is betrothed.*

Do not say “FY-an-SEE’.”

Fiancé is masculine; *fiancée* is feminine.

The Anglicized pronunciation, both masculine and feminine forms, is like the French, except for the nasal “n” in the second syllable. *Fiancé* and *fiancée* are pronounced alike:

FEE-ahn-SAY'

FIFTH COLUMNIST. *A spy; a subversive renegade.*

It was with much surprise that I recently heard a leading American radio commentator repeatedly say “fith KAHL-yum-ist” on a network broadcast.

The average layman may be pardoned for this common error, but it seems to me a professional broadcaster, whose chief working tool is the spoken word, should have learned better at his mother’s knee.

“Fith” and “KAHL-yum-ist” are vulgarisms, and broadcasting them from “border to border and coast to coast” makes them all the more deplorable.

It is said (*Time*, May 13, 1940) that General Emilio Mola, of Franco’s army, invented the phrase. After Toledo had fallen, he broadcast: “We have four columns advancing upon Madrid. The fifth column (sympathizers within the city) will rise at the proper time.”

As now used, the term means “spies,” “soldiers in disguise,” “renegades and traitors who work from within a country to undermine and sabotage its government and its systems of defense.”

The second “f” should never be omitted from the word *fifth*. In *columnist* the *column-* should never be pronounced “KAHL-yum,” to rhyme with *volume*. And be sure that the “n” is plainly sounded:

fifth KAHL-um-nist

FILM, NOUN. *A thin, slight covering; photographic film.*

It is worthy of note that, even in high places, the mispronunciation "FILL-um" for *film* is frequently heard. Also "ELL-um" for *elm*.

The combination of "l" followed by "m" in the same syllable presents a stumbling block to many speakers, and the little-girl-next-door, it is observed, blithely omits the "l" in *film* and reduces the word to "fim," which, if one were forced to make a choice, could be considered the lesser of the two evils.

If *film* and *elm* are difficult words for you, say the word *filmy* (FILL-mee) a few times; then omit the "y" in the second syllable and keep the lips closed on the "m." If the lips are parted after the "m," the word then becomes "FILL-muh," almost as erroneous as "FILL-um."

Correct pronunciation:

film

FINALE, NOUN. *The closing part, selection, or scene.*

In show business, the mispronunciation "fine alley" is quite general. "Fuh-NAIL," too, is not uncommon. Neither has support of the dictionaries.

The first syllable rhymes with *see*; the "a" is broad as in *father*; the "e" has the "ay" sound of *may*:

fee-NAH-lay or fi-NAH-lee

FINIS, NOUN. *The end; conclusion.*

Neither "FIN-iss" nor "FIN-ish."

The first syllable rhymes with *by*, *my*:

FY-niss

FJORD, NOUN. *A narrow inlet of the sea, as in Norway and Alaska.*

This word is also spelled *fiord*. The words *firth* and *frith* have the same meaning as *fjord*.

Do not say "fawrd" or "fuh-jawrd." The "j" (or "i") has the sound of the consonant "y":

fyawrd

FLACCID, ADJECTIVE. *Flabby; yielding.*

Not "FLASS-id."

The first "c" has the sound of "k." Say:

FLAK-sid

FOREHEAD, NOUN. *That part of the face above the eyes; the brow.*

We must not allow the spelling of this word to mislead us. Some authorities frown on "FORE-hed" as incorrect.

The correct pronunciation is contained in a familiar jingle that was written for his children by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow when daughter Edith naughtily refused to have her hair curled. Note that he rhymes *forehead* with *horrid*.

There was a little girl
Who had a little curl
Right in the middle of her *forehead*;
And when she was good
She was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was *horrid*.

Give the "ö" in the first syllable the sound of *ah*; the second syllable rhymes with *red*:

FAHR-ed

FOREIGN, ADJECTIVE. *Alien; of or from other countries.*

Seldom do we hear this word pronounced correctly, despite the fact that it is in the vocabulary of every one of us. *Foreign* should not be pronounced "fawrn," to rhyme with *corn*, *horn*, as: "He is *fawrn-born*."

All dictionaries list *foreign* as a two-syllable word. The "o" has the "ah" sound of *possible*, *gossip*, *hospital*; hence the first syllable must rhyme with *car* and *bar*, and not with *or* and *for*. The second syllable should be distinctly voiced; it rhymes with *sin*, *win*:

FAHR-in

Note: Some readers will question the "ah" sound in *foreign*. They are asked to refer to any American dictionary that uses the Webster diacritical marks. The pronunciation is seen to

be "föör'in." The short "ö" is neither the "ö" of *soft* nor the "ö" of *orb*. It is the "ö" of *odd*, *hot*, correctly pronounced "ahd," "haht." In the new *Webster's*, this explanation appears: ". . . in the prevailing speech of the whole country, words containing 'short o' (ö) are pronounced with an entirely unrounded vowel identical with ä in *father*."

FORMIDABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Dreadful; menacing; threatening.*

Not "fawr-MID-uh-b'l."

Place the accent on the first syllable:

FAWR-mi-duh-b'l

FRAGILE, ADJECTIVE. *Brittle; delicate; easily broken.*

The dictionaries do not authorize the widely heard "FRAY-jile."

The first syllable should rhyme with *badge*; the "i" is obscured:

FRADGE-ull

FREQUENT, VERB. *To visit often.*

The verb *frequent* should be carefully distinguished from the adjective *frequent* meaning "often," "repeated."

When *frequent* is used in the sense of: "He *frequents* the night clubs," or "He is a *frequent*er of the opera," the second syllable receives the accent:

frequent: free-KWENT

*frequent*er: free-KWENT-er

FÜHRER, GERMAN NOUN. *Leader, guide.*

Chancellor Hitler (right name: Adolf Schicklgruber!) is called *der Führer* by members of the Nazi (NAHT-see) Party.

The title should not be pronounced "FEW-rer" or "FEW-roar." Note also that the common German spelling is not "Fuehrer," as it appears most often in American newspapers.

Führer is correctly spelled with "u" umlaut (OOM-lout), a character that most newspapers do not have. It is a German "u" with two dots over it: "ü."

"Ü" is approximately the same in sound as the French "u"

in *tu, vu, rue*. To pronounce it, purse the lips as if to say "oo," as in *food*. Now, without changing the position of the lips say "ee," blending the "oo" and "ee" sounds equally together.

This is the correct vowel sound in the first syllable of *Führer*, but since the sound is very difficult for the average speaker and is impossible to reproduce by English phonetics, the pronunciation given below, while not exact, will be closer to the correct German than the commonly heard "FEW-rer." *Der* is not pronounced "durr"; it should rhyme with *fair, hair*.

Approximate pronunciation:

dair FEAR-rer

(See NAZI, page 185.)

GALA, ADJECTIVE. *Pertaining to festivities.*

The pronunciation most often heard, "GAL-luh," in which the first syllable rhymes with *pal*, has scant dictionary support. However, there is a word that is correctly pronounced "GAL-luh": it is *Galla*, the name of an African tribe.

Therefore, when we speak of, say, a church festival as a "GAL-luh" occasion, what we are actually saying is that the festivities are of, for, or by a tribe of savage and coffee-colored Africans. Any editor would stigmatize this as extremely inaccurate reporting.

The first syllable of *gala* should rhyme with either *bay* or *bah*:

First choice: GAY-luh

Second choice: GAH-luh

Note: Do not rhyme the first syllable of *saga*, with *bag, fag*.

First choice: SAH-guh

Second choice: SAY-guh

GALAPAGOS, PROPER NOUN. *An island group on the equator in the Pacific.*

Do not say "gal-uh-PAY-guzz."

This archipelago, which belongs to Ecuador, consists of twelve large and several hundred small islands. Only three have ever been utilized.

The name is derived from the Spanish *galapago*, "a tortoise" (TAWR-tuss), and refers to the giant tortoises that have evolved on the islands. The great turtles reach a length

of four feet or more and weigh in excess of four hundred pounds. They are the oldest living animals on earth.

The broad "a" (ah) should be used in the first three syllables and the long "o," as in *toe*, in the fourth. Accent the second syllable:

gah-LAH-pah-goess

GALLIPOLIS, PROPER NOUN.

Question: Please give the correct pronunciation of *Gallipolis*, O. O. McIntyre's birthplace.

Answer: The name is a good rhyme for "alley police." Accent the first and last syllables:

GAL-ee-poe-LEESS'

GANGRENE, NOUN. *A mortification of some part of the body.*

The commonly heard "gan-GREEN" has no dictionary support. Accent the first syllable, which rhymes with *bang*, *hang*:

GANG-green

GANTLET and GAUNTLET, NOUNS.

These words are so nearly alike in spelling as to be commonly confused. But they are not even remotely related and cannot be interchanged.

Gantlet is from the Swedish *gatlopp*, "running down a lane." A *gantlet* originally was a form of punishment practiced by soldiers and Americans Indians. The offender, stripped to the waist, was forced to run between two lines of men who trounced him severely with ropes, switches, or clubs.

Gauntlet is from the French *gantelet*, "a glove so designed that it protected the hand (of knights) from wounds." Today, a *gauntlet* is "any glove that covers the wrist."

Both words have the same pronunciation:

gantlet: } **GAWNT-let**
gauntlet: }

GAOL, NOUN. *A place of confinement; a jail.*

Most readers are familiar with this word and know that it is another term for *jail*. But there appears to be considerable uncertainty as to the pronunciation. "Gole," to rhyme with

dole, and “gale,” to rhyme with *dale*, are frequently heard. Neither is correct.

Gaol for *jail* is still the official form in England; in the United States, *jail* is both the official and literary form. We are perhaps more familiar with the word *gaol* from the title of Oscar Wilde’s poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, which he wrote after his imprisonment in the gaol of Reading, Berkshire County, England.

Gaol and *jail* are not only identical in meaning, but the words should also be pronounced alike:

JAIL

GAPE, VERB. *To open the mouth; to yawn.*

Three pronunciations are sanctioned by the dictionaries, although the third choice, “gap,” has scant dictionary support:

First choice: gaip

Second choice: gahp

GARAND, PROPER NOUN.

Question: How is the name of the *Garand* rifle pronounced?

Answer: The Army’s semiautomatic rifle is named for the inventor, John C. Garand. The “g” is hard, as in *go*; the “a” in the first syllable is flat, as in *arrogant*, *carrot*:

GAR-und

GENGHIS KHAN, PROPER NOUN. *Asiatic conqueror of the twelfth century.*

In *Genghis*, the “g” has the sound of “j”; the “s” is pronounced “z.”

Some authorities give to “k” in *Khan* the fricative “ch” sound, as in the German *ach*, *ich*, *dich*.

Correct pronunciation:

JEN-giz KAHN

GENUINE, ADJECTIVE. *Real; authentic; true.*

“JEN-yoo-wine” is never permissible, although it is frequently heard in high places.

The third syllable must rhyme with *din*, *fin*, *sin*:

JEN-yoo-in

Note: As no hard and fast rule can be laid down for the pronunciation of the *-ine* suffix, the following list of first-choice pronunciations will remove much of the confusion that troubles the average speaker.

Words That Rhyme with

<i>Sin</i>	<i>Sign</i>	<i>Seen</i>
aniline	alkaline	Argentine
crinoline	aquiline	barkentine
crystalline	asinine	cuisine
discipline	canine	gabardine
doctrine	concubine	guillotine
engine	feline	libertine
feminine	iodine	magazine
gelatine	leonine	mezzanine
genuine	porcupine	nectorine
heroine	quinine	quarantine
jasmine	saline	serpentine
masculine	supine	tambourine
opaline	turpentine	ultramarine
	valentine	

(See ASININE, page 50.)

GEODUCK, NOUN. *A large clam.*

Question: What is the pronunciation of the word *geoduck*? Everyone here [in Tacoma] says "gooey duck."

Answer: *Geoduck* is pronounced **JEE-oh-duk**.

However, *geoduck* is a corruption of the Nisquilli Indian word *gweduck*, which means "to dig deep." *Gweduck* is pronounced **GWEE-duk**.

JEE-oh-duk

GESTAPO, GERMAN NOUN. *German secret police.*

This coined name is the abridged form of *Geheime Staats Polizei* (ge-HY-muh shtahts poe-leet-SY).

A more formidable mouthful is the complete name of the Russian *Gay-Pay-Oo* (G.P.U.), the secret service organization of the Soviet government: *Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie*.

In the United States, one calls a *cop*. In Germany or Russia, if one was set upon by an assassin, one could be drawn and neatly quartered ere half the syllable of *Geheime Staats Polizei* or *Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie* could be shrieked out on the midnight air.

In *Gestapo*, the initial "g" is hard, as in *get*, the "a" in the second syllable is broad (ah); and the "o" in the third syllable is long, as in *toe*:

guh-SHTAH-poe

(See COP, page 394.)

GESTURE, NOUN. *A motion of the body or limbs; an act of courtesy or diplomacy.*

From the large number of questions received about this word, it is evident that many persons, even those of good education, are not sure whether the first syllable should be like *guess* or like *Jess*.

The "g" must have the soft sound of "j," as in *gem*; not the hard sound of "g," as in *get*. The second syllable, *-ture*—as in *picture*, *nature*, *furniture*, *signature*, *literature*, etc.—may be pronounced either "cher" or "tyoor," but never "choor." The new *Webster's* gives "cher" as "the natural pronunciation in general use by unaffected speakers."

First choice: JESS-cher

Second choice: JESS-tyoor

GILA MONSTER. *A large lizard found only in the southwestern United States.*

Gila is an important word in Arizona and New Mexico, where it occurs frequently as the name of a river, a valley, a county, a town, a mountain range, an Indian reservation, a group of cliff dwellings, etc.

The Gila monster, the only venomous lizard in the world, is found chiefly in the valley of the Gila River in Arizona and New Mexico. The creature is about two feet in length. Its color is purplish black, with large blotches of pink or yellow.

Though sluggish by nature, the monster when angered is capable of rapid and vicious movement. Its bite often proves

fatal to man. Its grip is so powerful that the jaws must be pried apart.

Gila should not be pronounced "JILL-uh," "JY-luh," "JEE-luh," "GILL-uh," or "GY-luh." The "g" must have the sound of "h"; the "i" has the long "e" sound, as in *machine*:

HEE-luh

GIMMICK, NOUN.

Question: What is a *gimmick*?

Answer: It is a device used to manipulate crooked gambling wheels and the like. Stage magicians use the word *gimmick* to designate a contrivance that aids in tricks and illusions. The "g" is hard, as in *go*:

GIM-mik

GLASGOW, PROPER NOUN. *An important city of Scotland, situated on both banks of the Clyde.*

Do not say "GLASS-cow." Note that the second syllable is spelled -*gow*, not -*cow*.

Bird's-eye view of Glasgow: Population about 1,100,000. Chief industries are: textiles, glassmaking, papermaking, breweries, distilleries, locomotive works, and, most important, shipbuilding. Glasgow builds every variety of craft, from barges to battleships.

In Glasgow, use the broad "a" (ah) in the first syllable. The second syllable rhymes with *toe*, *hoe*, *woe*:

GLAHSS-goe

GONDOLA, NOUN. *A boat used in the canals of Venice.*

PERGOLA, NOUN. *An arbor or trellis.*

These words should not be accented on the second syllable, as: "gun-DOE-luh," "per-GOE-luh."

Accent the first syllable of each:

gondola: GAHN-doe-luh

pergola: PER-goe-luh

GOVERNMENT, NOUN. *Established political rule and administration.*

Announcer: And now, from the nation's capital, we bring you the voice of Senator John Q. Blank.

Senator Blank: (Harumph!) Ladies and gennelmun, we here in Wawrshindun who have clost kontak with the guvmunt (harumph!) and the policies of Prezduint Rooze-uhvelt . . . and so on for thirty incredible minutes, mispronunciation piling upon mispronunciation until one is amazed that the patient microphones do not finally rebel and refuse to pass another mutilated syllable.

Congress should pass an act making it a capital offense for any member to breast the air waves who has not learned at least the fundamentals of correct speech.

Rostrum thwacking is bad enough, but when it is accompanied by the perverted and unchaste pronouncing illiteracy of the average "statesman," it leaves radio listeners "as cold as the north side of a Janooary gravestone by starlight" (*The Biglow Papers*).

Of all words that should come pure and undefiled from Washington, *government* surely should be number one. To pronounce it correctly, simply say *govern* and follow with *-ment*:

GUV-ern-ment

(See WASHINGTON, page 258, and ROOSEVELT, page 223.)

GRATIS, ADVERB. *Free; without charge or fee.*

Gratis should not be rhymed with *lattice*. The "a" has the long sound, as in *fray*, *gray*, *tray*:

GRAY-tiss

One should avoid the redundant expression "free gratis" or, worse still, "free gratis for nothing." Since *gratis* means "free," the word alone is sufficient, as: "He sent us the tickets gratis."

Note: The "ay" sound is also correct in *apparatus*, *fracas*, and *status*, although a few authorities show the flat "a" of *mat*, *rat*, as second choice. But best cultured usage is overwhelmingly in favor of the long "a":

apparatus: AP-uh-RAY'-tuss

fracas: FRAY-kuss

status: STAY-tuss

Many readers have seen in print the word *literati*, meaning "men of letters." I have heard the word mispronounced "LIT-er-AH'-tee" even by members of the *literati*. Rhyme the third syllable with *day* and the last syllable with *dye*:

LIT-er-AY'-ty

GRIEVOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Distressing; injurious; expressing sorrow.*

This word should not rhyme with *previous*, as "GREE-vee-uss." Note that there is no "i" between the "v" and -ous.

Grievous rhymes with *leave us*:

GREE-vuss

GRIMACE, NOUN. *An expression of distaste or contempt.*

Do not accent the first syllable, thus: "GRIM-iss."

Place the stress on the second syllable, which rhymes with *race, face*:

grim-AYCE

GUILLOTINE, NOUN. *A machine for beheading persons.*

Question: Please pronounce *guillotine* and tell us if it is true that Dr. Guillotin was the first to be beheaded by the machine. Also, is it true that the *sirloin steak* got its name by being knighted by a king?

Answer: Dr. Joseph Ignace Guillotin, professor of anatomy at the Faculté de Paris, did not invent the beheading machine; he merely urged its use in 1789 "to render the process of execution as swift and painless as possible." The good *docteur* died a natural death twenty-five years after the French machine was named for him.

Similar machines, known as "The Maiden" and "The Halifax Gibbet" were used much earlier in Scotland, England, and in various parts of the Continent. In modern France, the *guillotine* is known as *La Veuve*, "the widow."

In the first syllable of *guillotine*, use the hard "g," as in *gilt*:

English: GILL-oh-teen

French: gee-yuh-TEEN

The legend of "Sir Loin" is pure humbuggery. James the First did not knight the loin in kingly high humor, for the phrase "a surloyn of beeff" was in general use a century before he was born. The word is from the French *surlonge*, meaning "above the loin."

GUMS, NOUN.

Question: Is it ever correct to rhyme *gums* with *rooms*?

Answer: "Goomz" for *gums* is incorrect. The only permissible rhyme is with *hums*:

gumz

GYNECOLOGIST, NOUN. *A physician who specializes in treating diseases of women.*

This word is from the Greek *gyne-* ("woman") and *-logy* ("science").

The dictionaries show three pronunciations. In the first choice, the first syllable is the "jin-" of *Jinny*; in the second choice, it is like the word *guy*; in the third choice, the "g" has the sound of "j" and the vowel is the long "i" sound of *by*, *my*:

First choice: JIN-ee-KAHL'-oh-jist

Second choice: GY-nee-KAHL'-oh-jist

Third choice: JY-nee-KAHL'-oh-jist

HABLA USTED ESPAÑOL? SPANISH. *Do you speak Spanish?*

The Spanish words that follow are familiar to most of us, but the pronunciations will fall strangely upon the average American ear. Yet they are as nearly correct as English phonetic spelling will permit.

Peso: Do not say "PAY-suh." The "o" in the second syllable is long, as in *hoe*, *toe*:

PAY-soe

Mexico: This was formerly spelled *Mejico*: In *la República de Mexico*, the "x" is not pronounced "eks"; it has the sound of "h" strongly aspirated. Correct pronunciations:

United States: MEK-see-koe

Mexican: MAY-hee-koe

Señor: Do not say "SEE-nore" or "SEEN-yor." The vowel sound of the first syllable is approximately the "ay" of *say*.

In *señora* and *señorita*, be sure to give the final "a" the broad "ah" sound of *father*:

sain-YORE

sain-YOE-rah

SAIN-yoe-REE'-tan

Tamales: Many speakers, of the North and East especially, pronounce this as a word of two syllables, thus: "tuh-MAHLZ." This is a three-syllable word:

tah-MAH-laiss

Chile con carne. In American usage it's CHILL-ee kun KAHR-nee. The correct Spanish is:

CHEE-lay kawn KAHR-nay

(See SEÑOR, page 229.)

HANDKERCHIEF, NOUN. *A small cloth for wiping the hands, face, or nose.*

The pronunciation frequently heard on the radio, "HAND'-ker-CHEEF," is an absurd contortion that is as erroneous as it is pompous. No dictionary supports it.

Such pronouncing fancywork would be highly amusing were it not that many listeners believe "if it is heard on the radio, it must be correct." No premise could be falser or more dangerous.

To broadcasters and listeners alike, this advice is prayerfully tendered: Never use a "new" or unfamiliar pronunciation until you have confirmed its correctness by consulting a recognized, late-edition American dictionary, or, better still, two or three of them.

As a matter of fact, the word *handkerchief* itself is one of those lovely, laughable, linguistic monstrosities that make the study of our tongue a fascinating adventure in which anything can happen—and usually does.

Consider this: The word *kerchief* means "a covering for the head." We needed a word to designate a piece of cloth carried in or used by the hand, so we tacked the word *hand* onto *kerchief*: *handkerchief*, thereby creating a word which literally means "a head covering which is worn in the hand." But we were not satisfied with this, for later we had need of still another term to describe a handkerchief worn in the

pocket; whereupon, with heedless ingenuity, we invented the term *pocket handkerchief*, "a covering for the head, to be carried in the hand but worn in the pocket." Beautiful!

The first syllable of *handkerchief* rhymes with *bang*; the third syllable rhymes with *cliff*:

HANG-ker-chiff

HARA-KIRI, NOUN. *Self-disembowelment.*

When a Nipponese gentleman decides to destroy himself by the national form of honorable suicide, he does not commit "Harry Carey."

Voluntary *hara-kiri* (from the Japanese *hara*, "abdomen," and *kiri*, "cutting") still survives in Japan, although it is now more commonly known as *seppuku* (sep-POO-kōō). It is practiced by men rendered desperate by private misfortune, or is resorted to as a protest against national policy or as a public acknowledgment of dishonor.

No disgrace is attached to this form of self-immolation. Indeed, the performance is a formal and dignified occasion. Every detail of *hara-kiri* is prescribed by tradition. It is often carried out in the presence of family, friends, or, in the case of political suicide, government officials. The suicide, in ceremonial dress, kneels on a mat, and into his stomach he plunges a dagger, draws it slowly across to the right, and gives it an upward cut. He sits motionless and expressionless as he bleeds to death.

It is said that for hundreds of years 1,500 *hara-kiris* have taken place annually in Japan.

Use the "ah" sound in the first two syllables and the "ee" sound in the third and fourth:

HAH-rah-KEE'-ree

HARASS, VERB. *To harry; to wear down by repeated assaults.*

This word is having a great vogue these days, especially in radio commentations: "The German air force has begun to 'huh-RASS' England again tonight. . . ."

The newer dictionaries now give sanction to the second-syllable accent, which widely prevails in Standard American usage.

Properly pronounced, the word is a fair rhyme for the name *Harris*. The first syllable should likewise be accented in *harassed*, *harasser*, *harassing*, and *harassment*. The second “a” is obscure, as in *sofa*:

harass: HAR-us or huh-RASS
harassed: HAR-ust or huh-RAST
harasser: HAR-us-er
harassing: HAR-us-ing or huh-RASS-ing
harassment: HAR-us-m’nt or huh-RASS-m’nt

HAUTEUR, NOUN. *Haughtiness; pride, arrogance.*

Hauteur is a real surprise word. It should not be pronounced “HAW-ter” or “HAW-cher.”

We have borrowed *hauteur* from the French. In that language, it means “highness,” “loftiness,” “elevation.”

As this word may be unfamiliar to some readers, let us use it correctly in a sentence or two: “His *hauteur* (haughtiness, arrogance) was displeasing to those who knew him. He wore an air of *hauteur*.”

The first syllable is either like the word *hoe* or the interjection *oh*. The second syllable, which receives the accent, rhymes with *her*, *per*:

First choice: hoe-TER
Second choice (French): oh-TER

HEARTH, NOUN. *The floor of a fireplace.*

The pronunciation “herth,” to rhyme with *earth*, *dearth*, is now considered dialectal. The correct vowel sound is the “ah” of *father*.

The reader may well ask: “How can ‘ea’ spell ‘ah’?” The answer to that perfectly natural query is that “ea” has a variety of sounds in English: the “ee” sound of *fear*, the “er” sound of *earth*, the “air” sound of *bear*, the “eh” sound of *dead*, the “ay” sound of *great*, and the “ah” sound of *heart*. “Still,” insists the reader, “if *earth* is pronounced ‘erth,’ why isn’t *hearth* pronounced ‘herth’?”

Well, *earth* was formerly pronounced “ahrth,” even among the educated, and the pronunciation still survives in certain American dialects. *Hearth*, like *earth*, originally had the “ah”

sound, but when *earth* became “erth,” *hearth* followed the leader and became “herth” for a time. But not for long; the “ah” sound is now best usage:

hahrth

HEINOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Hateful; bad; odious.*

This word is familiar to most of us in every respect but pronunciation. More than a few of us lift the “i” bodily from the first syllable, transplant it after the “n” in the second syllable, and call the word “HEE-nee-uss,” a distortion that does not have the sanction of any dictionary.

This is a word of two syllables only. The accent is on the first, which is identical with the word *hay*; the second syllable rhymes with *fuss*, *muss*:

HAY-nuss

HELPMATE, NOUN. *A companion; a wife.*

Ministers especially will find *helpmate* a surprise word, all the more so if they have been accustomed to pronouncing and spelling the word as “helpmeet.”

Both *helpmate* and *helpmeet* have grown out of a corruption of an expression found in Genesis ii: 18. The Lord, pondering Adam’s loneliness, said: “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an *help meet* for him.”

Meet, in this passage, is an adjective meaning “suitable, fit, proper, appropriate.” Thus we see that the literal meaning of the passage is: “I will make him a helper suitable for him.” *Meet* in this sense is used elsewhere in the Bible, notably in Luke xv: 32: “It was *meet* (“proper”) that we should make merry.”

Helpmate, despite its irregular origin, is now sanctioned by most dictionaries. But *helpmeet* is dubious indeed, and I should advise against it in both speech and writing.

HELP-mait

HEMOPHILIA, NOUN. *A condition of uncontrollable hemorrhage.*

This condition often runs in families, members of which are known as “bleeders.” As the blood will not readily clot,

a small bruise or cut may cause death in a few hours. Hemophilia occurs almost exclusively in males, but is transmitted by the females of a family.

Hemophilia is hereditary in several royal families of Europe, notably the Romanovs (roe-MAH-noafs) of Russia and the family of the exiled king of Spain. On September 5, 1938, the heir to the crown of Spain, Don Alfonso de Bourbon y Battenberg, suffered a leg fracture and bruises about the face when his car crashed against a telegraph pole. He bled to death despite the efforts of physicians.

Don't say "HEM-uh-FEEL'-yuh."

Correct pronunciation:

First choice: HEE-moe-FILL'-ee-uh

Second choice: HEM-oh-FILL'-ee-uh

HICCOUGH, NOUN. *A spasmodic contraction of the diaphragm.*

Small wonder that the word *hiccough* is almost universally mispronounced "HIK-kawf" or "HEE-kup." Dictionaries are vague as to how the curious spelling *hiccough* originated. But they do tell us that the word itself, however spelled, is imitative of the sound that accompanies the spasm.

Earlier forms were "hickup," "hicket," "hickok." Most authorities now prefer the phonetic spelling "hiccup."

Properly pronounced, *hiccough* and *hiccup* rhyme with *kick up*:

HIK-up

HIMALAYA, PROPER NOUN. *A mountain range in southern Asia.*

It is correct to speak of these mountains as *the Himalaya* (no final "s"). It is not correct to say "HIM-uh-LY'-yuh."

These are the loftiest mountains on earth. They separate India from Tibet (ti-BET). The tallest peak is Mt. Everest, 29,141 feet, named for Sir George Everest, who, in 1841, was the first to fix its position and measure its height. Mt. Everest has never been scaled. Many lives have been lost in the attempt.

Accent the second syllable, which has the “ah” sound of *father*:

him-MAH-luh-yuh

Also heard: HIM-uh-LAY’yuh

HOMAGE, NOUN. *Reverence; respectful honor.*

The word *homage* has no connection with the word *home*. Do not say “HOME-idge.”

The “o” must have the sound of “ah”:

First choice: HAHM-idge

Second choice: AHM-idge

HOMOGENIZE, VERB. *To make homogeneous.*

This is a comparatively new word.

Homogenized milk was introduced commercially in the United States in 1935. The process—passing milk under great pressure through a small orifice to break up the fat globules (GLAHB-yoolz), casein (KAY-see-in) shreds, etc., increasing digestibility—was developed in the laboratories of a Canadian college.

The pronunciation “hoe-MAH-jen-ize” is widely used in the milk industry. The older dictionaries do not sanction it, preferring “HOE-moe-jen-ize.” But the newer dictionaries prefer the accent on the second syllable.

hoe-MAH-jen-ize

Less frequently: HOE-moe-jen-ize

HONOLULU, PROPER NOUN. *Chief city of Hawaii, near the famed Waikiki beach.*

Do not say “HAH-nuh-LOO’-luh.”

Hawaiian is a phonetic language of remarkable beauty. The five vowels, “a,” “e,” “i,” “o,” “u,” are given the European values “ah,” “ay,” “ee,” “oh,” “oo.” The consonants are “k,” “p,” “h,” “w,” “l,” “n,” and “m.” The Hawaiian language is one of the principal members of the Polynesian group.

Hawaiian words, unlike English words, are pronounced as they are spelled. For example, Hollywood and Radio City “Hawaiiians” heave nostalgic sighs for the beach at “wy-kee-

KEE"; but grade-A Hawaiians prefer the long rolling breakers of a four-syllable strand: WAH-ee-KEE'-kee, the literal phonetic rendition of *Wa-i-ki-ki*. Similarly, *Hawaii* is not "how-WAH-yuh." However, hah-WY-ee is sanctioned for United States use.

In *Honolulu*, the "o" in the first two syllables is long, as in *hoe*. The third and fourth syllables rhyme with *coo*, *woo*:

HOE-noe-LOO'-loo

HOOSEGOW, NOUN (*U. S. slang*). Jail; guardhouse; prison.

It is generally admitted that the slang *hoosegow* is an American corruption of the Spanish word *juzgado*, "a court of justice," pronounced hooss-GAH-doe.

One plausible theory is that the soldiers of General Pershing's punitive expedition into Mexico in 1916, against Pancho Villa (PAHN-choe VEE-yah), picked this word up from the Mexicans, who applied it loosely to anything connected with trials or incarceration. Translated into the care-free lingo of the doughboy, and adopted forthwith by the man on the street, *juzgado* has been *hoosegow* ever since in the common American speech.

(Note: Pancho Villa was the assumed name of the Mexican revolutionary general. His real name, Doroteo Arango, was changed to that of a notorious Mexican desperado for whom he felt high regard.)

The first syllable of *hoosegow* does not rhyme with *booze*, *ooze*, *snooze*; it should rhyme with *goose*, *loose*, *noose*:

HOOSS-gow

Note: *Calaboose* is a corruption of *calabozo*, the Spanish word for "dungeon."

HORIZON, NOUN. *Where the earth seems to meet the sky.*

The first-syllable accent, as "HAWR-uh-z'n," is obsolete. Accent the second syllable, which rhymes with *dye*:

hoe-RY-z'n

HORS DE COMBAT, FRENCH. *Disabled from fighting; out of the combat.*

Do not say "horse dee COM-bat."

As will be seen from the above definition, this French

phrase has no connection with the horses of a cavalry troop. The French word *hors* means "out," "except," "but," "save," "out of," "without."

Hors is pronounced similarly to the English conjunction *or*, although some people of France pronounce the "h." The word *de* ("of") is pronounced approximately the same as the word *dub*, without the "b." The first syllable of *combat* has the French nasal sound of *bon*, *ton*, *son*; this cannot be accurately given by English phonetic spelling, since we have no sound like it in our language. The second syllable is accented and the "t" is silent:

awr duh kaw(n)-BAH

HORS-D'OEUVRES, FRENCH. *Relishes or appetizers.*

The most frequently heard mispronunciations are "awr DERZ," "hawr DERVZ," and the hilarious "horse doovers," actually paraded by a naïve hostess before her astonished guests!

Many sounds in French cannot be exactly reproduced by means of phonetic spelling, but since every housewife wants to pronounce this phrase correctly (and few do), we'll do the best we can with it.

In *hors*, the "h" and "s" are silent; the pronunciation is similar to that of the English word *or*. In *-d'oeuvres*, the (to us) outlandish spelling does suggest "doovers," but the vowel sound in the first syllable, *d'oeu-*, is approximately the "u" of *urn*, *burn*, but without the "r." The second syllable, *-vres*, is simply a breathy "vruh" sound made chiefly with the soft palate. The final "s" is not pronounced:

awr-DU-vruh

Note: There is no difference in pronunciation between the singular *hors-d'oeuvre* and the plural *hors-d'oeuvres*.

HOSIERY, NOUN. *Hose in general; stockings.*

That the mispronunciation "HOZE-ree" is virtually universal in the "hosiery profession" is indicated by the following incident:

A New York salesman for a wholesale hosiery concern recently wrote for the correct pronunciation of the word. I an-

swered, "HOE-zher-ee." He replied: "Now I'm in a first-class quandary. If I say 'HOZE-ree,' I'll know I'm wrong. If I say 'HOE-zher-ee,' all my business associates will *think* I'm wrong. What should I do?"

When a question like this arises, one must decide for oneself whether to temporize or stand to one's guns. Authorities do not dictate; they only report good usage.

There is but one authorized pronunciation. *Hosiery* is a word of three syllables. The second syllable has the "zh" sound of *azure*:

HOE-zher-ee

HOSTILE, ADJECTIVE. *Of or appropriate to an enemy.*

Do not say "HAHSS-tile."

The long "i" sound of *file* in the second syllable is a Britishism. Best American usage rhymes the second syllable with *still*:

HAHSS-till

Note: According to recognized authority, the prevailing tendency in England is toward the long "i" in words ending in *-ile*. But in America, the tendency is to give the vowel the short sound of *still*. This is a good general rule to follow, but there are exceptions, as this list of first-choice United States pronunciations will show:

Words That Rhyme with

<i>Style</i>	<i>Still</i>
exile	agile
reconcile	domicile
crocodile	fertile
gentile	futile
infantile	juvenile
bibliophile	mercantile
camomile	reptile
	textile
	versatile
	volatile

HUMBLE, ADJECTIVE. *Modest; mild; lowly; mean.*

It is not good usage to pronounce *humble* with the "h"

silent, as "UM-b'l." Likewise, the "h" should be heard in *human* and *humor*.

Since the initial "h" of *humble*, *human*, *humane*, *humid*, *humor*, *etc.*, must be plainly aspirated, it is archaic to use the indefinite article *an* before these words, as: "an humble man." The form *an* should be used only before words beginning with a vowel sound. It is correct to say: "an empty house; a humble home; an honest man (the 'h' is silent); a human being; an honorable act."

Correct pronunciation:

HUM-b'l

Let us combine a lesson in pronunciation with a little philosophy, thus:

If happy chance has placed you in
 A proud and lordly station;
 And if beneath you others toil
 For far less compensation;
 Thank fortune that you're lucky, and
 Don't swell in exaltation . . .
 Be HUM-b'l.

If you were born to wealth, and have
 The power to command
 A multitude of servitors,
 Don't rule with iron hand;
 For kindness earns more loyalty
 Than bitter reprimand . . .
 Be HEW-m'n.

If fame has been accorded you . . .
 By gracious providence;
 If thousands bow to worship you
 In awe and reverence,
 Don't count yourself among the gods,
 But cultivate a sense . . .
 Of HEW-mer.

HUMOR, NOUN. *That which appeals to a sense of the ludicrous; fancy; inclination.*

The initial "h," as just noted, should not be silent.

The original meaning of *humor* was "moisture." In early

physiology, the body was supposed to contain four fluids, or *humors*: *sanguine* ("blood"), *phlegm*, *choler* ("yellow bile"), and *melancholy* ("black bile"). If phlegm predominated, it would make a man phlegmatic; if the proportion of black bile was more than normal, a pronounced melancholy would result; and so on.

The adjectives *sanguinary*, *choleric*, *phlegmatic*, and *melancholy* still relate to man's "humors" in a psychological sense, but they are seldom used in the original meaning of body fluids.

Correct pronunciation:

HEW-mer

HURRICANE, NOUN. *A cyclone of large extent.*

Each year, from August to October, the word *hurricane* appears frequently on the front pages, as the destructive storms are brewed in the West Indies and scream across the Caribbean Sea to lash at the Gulf Coast of the United States, from the tip of Florida to Brownsville, Texas. *Hurricane* is from the name *Hurakan*, the thunder and lightning (do not spell this word *lightening*) devil-god of the Quiches, a Mayan tribe of Southern Guatemala.

The United States Weather Bureau grades wind forces according to the Beaufort scale, arranged in 1805 by Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort of the British Navy. Weather bureaus employ these terms in forecasts and reports:

	<i>Miles an Hour</i>	
Light Wind	1	to 7
Gentle	8	to 12
Moderate fresh	13	to 24
Strong	25	to 38
Gale	39	to 54
Whole Gale	55	to 75
Hurricane	above	75

Do not smother the last syllable of *hurricane* and pronounce the word "HER-uh-k'n." The syllable *-cane* is pronounced exactly like the word *cane*; it rhymes with *main*, *pain*, *rain*:

Correct pronunciation:

HER-i-kain

IDEA, NOUN. *A mental impression; thought; notion.*

Do not say "EYE-dear" or "eye-DEAR."

It is difficult to explain the widespread mispronunciation of this simple word. It cannot be that the word is thought to be spelled with an "r," for *idea* is scarcely ever written *idear* even by the illiterate.

A similar unexplained peculiarity of speech occurs chiefly in and about New York City, where, even among the cultured, it is not uncommon to hear "lawr" for *law*, "jawr" for *jaw*, and "sawr" for *saw*. I myself have heard these three vulgarisms uttered many times by New Yorkers of better than average education. Indeed, "lawr, jawr," and "sawr" are occasionally heard in the unguarded radio speech of capable broadcasters, one in particular who is a leading sports announcer of a major network.

As to the word *idea*, we need to do some mental homework and write one hundred times on the blackboard of our memories: There is no "r" in *idea*.

Accent the second syllable only:

eye-DEE-uh

IDENTITY, NOUN. *Sameness; exactness; individuality.*

In a recent experiment, a university class of twenty-six speech students was given the word *identity* to pronounce. The tally was twenty-seven mispronunciations, for the instructor also "muffed" it.

The word should not be pronounced: "id-DEN-nuh-tee."

This common mispronunciation contains two errors: First, the initial "i" should not be the short "i" of *bid*; it should have the long sound of *eye*. Second, the third syllable is not "nuh" but "-ti," as in *tip*. This applies to all words of the *identic* group:

identic: eye-DEN-tik

identical: eye-DEN-ti-kul

identically: eye-DEN-ti-kul-lee

identification: eye-DEN-ti-fi-KAY'shun

identify: eye-DEN-ti-fy

identity: eye-DEN-ti-tee

IDEOLOGY, NOUN.

Ideology is a word that is seen frequently these days in editorials and comments about the great social and economic revolution that has changed so much of the map of Europe. We see it thus: "According to Nazi ideology, Germany must take its rightful place as the master of the European destiny. . . ."

The word means "a scheme of things about life." Hence, Nazi ideology refers to the doctrine that motivates Germany in seeking mastery over most of the Eastern Hemisphere. On the other hand, American ideology is based on the belief that the freedom of the individual nation should and must be preserved.

First choice: EYE-dee-AH'luh-jee

Second choice: ID-ee-AH'luh-jee

IMPETIGO, NOUN. *An eruptive disease of the skin.*

Do not say "in-fan-TY-goe," or, as was actually heard on the air, "im-PET-ee-goe!"

Because this disease is prevalent among young children, many persons call it "infantigo."

The word is from the Latin *impetere*, "to attack."

Correct pronunciation:

im-pee-TY-goe

IMPIOUS**IMPOTENT****IMPUDENT**

Beware of these three imps! They must never be accented on the second syllable, thus: "im-PY-uss," "im-POE-t'nt," "im-PEW-d'nt."

The words are correctly accented on the first syllable only:

impious: IMP-ee-uss

impotent: IMP-oh-t'nt

impudent: IMP-yoo-d'nt

INCOGNITO, ADJECTIVE AND ADVERB. *With the identity concealed.*

The word should not be pronounced "IN-kahg-NEE'tuh" or "IN-kahg-NY'tuh."

Incognito, originally an Italian word, has its origin in the Latin *incognitus*, "unknown."

The second syllable only is accented:

in-KAHG-ni-toe

INDISPUTABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Unquestionable; not to be disputed.*

This word should not be stressed on the third syllable, as "in-diss-PEW-tuh-b'l."

Accent the second syllable only:

in-DISS-pew-tuh-b'l

INDUSTRY, NOUN. *Diligence; a branch of trade.*

The second syllable should not receive the accent, as "in-DUSS-tree." This common error will be avoided in accurate speech by saying:

IN-duss-tree

INFANTILE, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to infancy.*

Of the four pronunciations commonly heard, "IN-f'n-tull," "IN-f'n-teel," "IN-f'n-tile (the third syllable rhyming with *file*), and "IN-f'n-till," only the last two have dictionary support.

This adjective, when coupled with the noun *paralysis*, is a word of increasing significance in the American vocabulary, but it seems the word is more often mispronounced than not.

The first-choice pronunciation gives the "i" in the third syllable the long sound, as in *file*. In the second choice, the third syllable rhymes with *bill*, *fill*, *mill*:

First choice: IN-f'n-tile

Second choice: IN-f'n-till

AD INFINITUM, LATIN. *Without limit.*

This expressive Latin phrase is most familiar when coupled with the similar *ad nauseam*, as: "The speech went on *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam* ('without end and to the point of disgust')."

Infinitum should not be pronounced "in-FIN-i-tum."

The accent properly falls on the third, or “-i-,” syllable, which rhymes with *dye, lye, eye*:

ad IN-fin-EYE'-tum

A good memory verse was written by Jonathan Swift, English satirist and author of *Gulliver's Travels*:

So, naturalists observe, a flea
Hath smaller fleas that on him prey;
And these have smaller still to bite 'em;
And so proceed *ad infinitum*.

Later, Augustus De Morgan carried the thought further by adding:

And the great fleas themselves, in turn,
Have greater fleas to go on;
While these again have greater still,
And greater still, and so on.

INGENIOUS INGENUOUS

These words appear to be twins, but they are not even kissing cousins. The strong resemblance is purely accidental, since they share no tie of family blood. They are spelled alike, save for the sixth letter, but there the similarity ends.

Ingenious (from the Latin *ingeniosus*) means “possessed of genius or unusual mental powers,” “cleverness.” The second syllable rhymes with *seen*:

in-JEEN-yuss

Ingenuous (from the Latin *ingenuus*) means “of honorable extraction,” “noble,” “frank,” “candid,” “artless.” The second syllable rhymes with *men*:

in-JEN-yoo-uss

INQUIRY, NOUN. *A question; a query; investigation.*

The prevalent American pronunciation, “IN-kwear-ee,” is not to be found in any of these accepted dictionaries: *Funk and Wagnall's*, *Century*, *Macmillan's*, *Winston's*, *Oxford*, *Hemphill*, *Jones*, *Wyld*. However, it does appear as second choice in the new *Webster's*, and a few others.

The better pronunciation, with the accent on the second

syllable, and with the “i” long, as in *quite* and *quire*, is not a “new” pronunciation by any means; it has been well established by generations of speech authorities.

To pronounce *inquiry* correctly, simply place an “ee” sound at the end of the word *inquire*.

in-KWY-ree; also: IN-kwear-ee

INSIGNIA, NOUN. *Marks, badges, or emblems.*

Are these statements correct: “The badge is the policeman’s *insignia* of authority. The sergeant’s chevrons are the *insignias* of his rank?”

Both statements are incorrect.

Apparently few persons understand that *insignia* is a plural noun and that it is properly used for two or more emblems or badges.

“Ah, yes,” say Latin students, “then *insignium* is the correct singular form, isn’t it?”

Not so. The correct singular is the word *insigne*.

How to use the words: “One badge is an *insigne*; two badges are the *insignia* (not *insignias*).”

Correct pronunciations:

insigne: in-SIG-nee
insignia: in-SIG-nee-uh

INTERESTING, ADJECTIVE. *Engaging the attention; designed to create interest.*

Interesting is number one in this book’s list of the ten most frequently mispronounced English words. Do not say: “IN-trist,” “IN-trist-id,” “IN-trist-ing”; and do not use the ruralism “IN-ter-sting.”

The new *Webster’s* indicates that “IN-trist-ing” is current in England and is accepted there as good usage. Perhaps it is. However, “IN-trist-ing” is not recommended or even mentioned in Britain’s monumental *Oxford English Dictionary*. Nor is “IN-trist-ing” sanctioned for United States use by *Webster’s New International Dictionary*, *Funk and Wagnall’s New Standard Dictionary*, the *Century Dictionary*,

Macmillan's Modern Dictionary, or Winston's Simplified Dictionary.

Interest should have three distinct syllables; *interested* and *interesting* are four-syllable words. Note this carefully: the third syllable (-*est*-) must rhyme with *best, rest, nest, vest*:

interest: IN-ter-est

interested: IN-ter-est-ed

interesting: IN-ter-est-ing

Teachers, have your students sing the following lines to the tune of the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, but be sure that they do not accent the third syllable:

INTERESTING

This word is widely used
In every corner of the land,
And it should have four syllables,
You please will understand.
Not "IN-trist-ing" nor "IN-ter-sting";
Oh, let the word expand!
Say IN-ter-est-ing, please,

Chorus

Glory, glory, why not do it?
Certainly you'll never rue it.
This is all that there is to it:
Say IN-ter-est-ing, please.

The word should not be jammed
Together. Dictionaries say
That "IN-trist-ing" is incorrect
In good old U. S. A.
The "est" should rhyme with *rest*.
This is the proper way:
Say IN-ter-est-ing, please.

IODINE QUININE VITAMIN

A nonplused reader makes this appeal: "Please give me a rule for pronouncing the vowel 'i.' I never know whether it

should have the long sound as in *valentine*, the short sound as in *masculine*, or the 'e' sound of *machine*. Can you help me?"

I wish there were such a rule.

The vowel "i" is a naughty alphabetical turncoat, a vacillating fellow who can never make up his mind what he wants to be. For example, in scores of words ending with *-ine*, he will not stay put, but jumps from the long "i" of *turpentine* to the short "i" of *discipline*, and from there to the long "e" sound of *marine*.

His indecision adds confusion to confusion. Even the dictionaries have not been able to change his evil nature. But since he is indispensable, we must accept the knave with the best grace we can muster.

Correct pronunciations:

iodine { first choice: EYE-oh-dine
second choice: EYE-oh-din
third choice: EYE-oh-deen

quinine { U.S.: KWY-nine
British: kwi-NEEN
Obsolete: KWIN-IN

vitamin { U.S.: VY-tuh-min
Obsolete: VIT-uh-min
Obsolete: VY-tuh-meen

IOWA, PROPER NOUN. *One of the states of the Union.*

Iowa was named for the Iowas, a Siouan tribe formerly dwelling in Iowa but now practically extinct, except in Kansas and Oklahoma. The name means "Sleepy People."

Although it is incorrect to say "EYE-uh-way," rhyming the third syllable with *bay*, *day*, the mispronunciation is widely heard, even in the Hawkeye state itself, in the lusty and rousing state song:

EYE-uh-way!
EYE-uh-way!
That's where the
Tall corn grows!

In the third syllable of *Iowa* use the obscured "a" (uh), as in *sofa*:

EYE-oh-wuh

(See DES MOINES, page 98.)

IRELAND, PROPER NOUN.

" . . . sure they called it eye-*yer*-LAND!"

But the dictionaries do not agree with the "Irish" tenors of the airways. *Ireland* is not a three-syllable word. Nor should *-land* rhyme with *band*, *hand*, *sand*; the "a" is obscured.

To pronounce the first syllable correctly, say "eye" and follow with the sound of "r," thus:

IRE-1'nd

Note: Ireland is also known as *Erin*, pronounced: AIR-un, and *Eire*, pronounced: AIR-uh.

The Irish Free State, the southern and central part of Ireland, was made a self-governing dominion in December, 1921. The Irish name of the Free State is *Saorstat Eireann*, pronounced: SAWR-stawt AIR-un.

The word *shamrock* is from the Irish word *seamrog*, meaning "three-leaved"; "clover." St. Patrick saw in the shamrock a symbol of the Holy Trinity.

IRON

IRONY

Question: Is there a difference in the *iron* of these two words?

Answer: Yes. It was once good usage to pronounce *iron* as "EYE-run," especially in singing. This is now regarded as archaic by modern authorities. Better say:

EYE-ern

In *irony*, the reverse is true. Make the second syllable rhyme with *toe*:

EYE-roe-nee

IRREVOCABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Beyond recall; not revocable.*

Do not accent the third syllable, as "ear-ree-VOE-kuh-b'l."

Place the accent on the second syllable:

ear-REV-oh-kuh-b'l

ITALIAN, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to Italy.*

The vulgarism "eye-TAL-yun" has no place in cultured American speech. Why this grotesquerie is so widespread in these days of radio and talking newsreels is unknown to me. But we should have learned better in the first grade.

If we were forced to write "Don't say 'eye-TAL-yun'" a hundred times a day until we could really remember not to say it, this world would be a far sweeter abiding place.

The initial "I" in *Italian* should be short as in *Italy*, never long as in *item*:

it-TAL-yun

ITALICS, NOUN. *In printing, letters that slope to the right.*

Although the indispensable word *italics* is in the vocabulary of newspapermen, printers, writers, advertising men, and publishers, all of whom make constant use of italic letters like these, chiefly for emphasis, there are but few persons among them who have ever pronounced the word correctly within their lifetimes.

My guess is that ninety per cent say "eye-TAL-iks." In the newspaper world, one hundred per cent is perhaps closer to the mark, even in the chaste utterances of such patricians as society editors and dramatic critics. The commonly heard "eye-TAL-iks" is as gross an error in pronunciation as is "eye-TAL-yun" for *Italian*. No dictionary supports either.

Since the word *italics* derives from *Italy* and *Italian*, the "i" in the first syllable must have the short sound as in the word *it*, not the long "i" (eye) as in *item*:

it-TAL-iks

ITALO-, PREFIX. *Of or pertaining to Italy.*

Italo-, *Greco-*, and the other combining forms here listed, are to be used only as the first words of compounds. For example, it is correct to refer to the "Italo-Greek war," or the "Greco-Italian war," but not the "Italo-Greco war" or the "Italian-Greco war."

Also note that *Italo-* is pronounced neither "it-TAL-oh" nor "eye-TAL-oh." The first syllable only is accented:

IT-uh-loe

Prefixes Denoting Nationality

<i>Afro-</i> ("African"):	AF-roe
<i>Anglo-</i> ("English"):	ANG-gloe
<i>Arabo-</i> ("Arabian"):	AR-uh-boe
<i>Austro-</i> ("Austrian"):	AWS-troe
<i>Chino-</i> ("Chinese"):	CHY-noe
<i>Europeo-</i> ("European"):	YOO-roe-PEE'-oh
<i>Finno-</i> ("Finnish"):	FIN-oh
<i>Franco-</i> ("French")	FRANG-koe
<i>Germano-</i> ("German"):	JER-muh-noe
<i>Greco-</i> ("Grecian"):	GREE-koe
<i>Hispano-</i> ("Spanish"):	hiss-PAY-noe
<i>Indo-</i> ("Indian"):	IN-doe
<i>Italo-</i> ("Italian"):	IT-uh-loe
<i>Mongolo-</i> ("Mongolian"):	MAHNG-guh-loe
<i>Russo-</i> ("Russian"):	RUSS-oh
<i>Scoto-</i> ("Scotch"):	SKAH-toe
<i>Serbo-</i> ("Serbian"):	SER-boe
<i>Turko-</i> ("Turkish"):	TER-koe

ITINERARY, NOUN. *The record, or route, of a journey.*

Do not shorten this word to four syllables, as "eye-TIN-er-ee."

Give the word five syllables, and accent the second and fourth:

eye-TIN'-er-AIR-ee

JALOPY, NOUN. *An old and worn-out automobile.*

The origin of this slang word is unknown.

Correct pronunciation:

juh-LAH-pee

DR. JEKYLL. *A famous character of fiction.*

Do not say "JEK-ull," to rhyme with *freckle*.

And be sure that you do not confuse the two main characters of Robert Louis Stevenson's wild, symbolic tale, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Do not say: "He's a regular Dr. Jekyll" if you wish to make a comparison that is odious, for Jekyll was the kindly, upright half of the strange

dual personality. Mr. Hyde was the brutish and depraved killer.

The first syllable of *Jekyll* should rhyme with *fee, see, tee*:
JEE-k'l

JEWELRY, NOUN. *Jewels collectively; personal ornaments.*

This word is not only commonly mispronounced "JOO-ler-ree" but is misused as well.

Jewelry is a general and somewhat abstract term, like the word *goods*. It is a word of recent introduction, not appearing in Shakespeare, the Bible, Milton, or Johnson's Dictionary.

Instead of saying *jewelry*, it is better to speak of one's *jewels*, which, contrary to popular belief, does not mean precious stones only. *Jewel* is from the Latin *jocus*, "play," "jest." A jewel is any costly ornament of gold, silver, enameled work, etc., with or without precious stones.

Correct pronunciation:

JOO-el-ree

JODHPURS, NOUN. *A kind of close-fitting riding breeches.*

Jodhpurs are named for the Indian state of Jodhpur, in the Rajputana agency. The name should not be pronounced "JAHD-pers" or "JAHD-fers."

The first syllable rhymes with *rode*; the second syllable is exactly like the word *poor*, with a "z" added:

JODE-poorz

JOHN. *Masculine proper name derived from the Hebrew; literally, "the gift of God."*

A reader asks for the different variations of the name *John*. The results of this research have proved to be so interesting that they are published here for the information of readers at large.

Pronunciations of "John"

English:	<i>John</i>	jahn
Latin:	<i>Johannes</i>	joe-HAN-eez
Italian:	<i>Giovanni</i>	joe-VAHN-nee

Pronunciations of "John" (continued)

Spanish:	<i>Juan</i>	hwahn
French:	<i>Jean</i>	zhah(n) (French nasal "n")
Dutch:	<i>Johann</i>	YOE-hahn
	<i>Hans</i>	hahnss
	<i>Jan</i>	yahn
Polish:	<i>Jan</i>	yahn
Russian:	<i>Ivan</i>	ee-VAHN
Swedish:	<i>Johan</i>	YOE-hahn
	<i>Hans</i>	hahnss
Hungarian:	<i>Janos</i>	YAH-nahsh
German:	<i>Johann</i>	YOE-hahn
	<i>Johannes</i>	yoe-HAHN-ess
	<i>Hans</i>	hahnss
Greek:	<i>Ioannis</i>	EE-oh-AH'-niss
Rumanian:	<i>Ion</i>	yone (rhymes with <i>bone</i>)

JOUST

VERB. *To engage in combat.*

NOUN. *A combat; a tournament.*

In popular usage *joust* means "to argue or debate."

The knightly sport of jousting, or tilting with lances from horseback, apparently originated in France. By the twelfth century, the tournament had become so high in public favor in England that Henry II found it necessary to forbid the sport. The word *joust* is now used loosely for any form of combat or competition.

The English generally pronounce the word "joost," to rhyme with *boost*. In the United States, the word should rhyme with *bust* or with *soused*:

just or jowst

JUÁREZ, PROPER NOUN. *A town in Mexico across the Rio Grande from El Paso.*

Do not say "wah-REZZ."

The town was named for Benito Pablo Juárez, President of Mexico (1858 to 1863, 1867 to 1872), on whose dramatic political career a motion picture was based.

The accent falls on the first syllable. *Ju-* has the sound of “hw” strongly aspirated; *-rez* is approximately like the word *race*:

HWAH-race

KIBITZER, NOUN. *One who gives unasked-for advice.*

This expressive word is the Yiddish variant of the German word *kiebitzen*, from *kiebitz*, the German name for the “pewit” or “lapwing,” a little bird of Europe that has an annoying habit of uttering shrill, wailing cries to warn game when a hunter draws near. Hence, a *kibitzer* is a meddler; one who is free with gratuitous advice, as at a card game.

Accent the first syllable:

KIB-it-ser

KILOMETER, NOUN. *In the metric system, a measure of length.*

Do not say “kill-AH-mit-er.” Many otherwise careful speakers accent this word on the second syllable through false analogy with *barometer*, *chronometer*, *pedometer*, *speedometer*.

At first glance, *kilometer* and *barometer* do appear to be words of similar origin. The truth is they are not even distantly related; it is the repetition of *-ometer* that leads to the confusion.

Let us examine these two words further: *Kilometer* means 1,000 meters, or 3,280.8 feet. In virtually all the countries of Europe, the kilometer is used instead of the mile. The *-meter* in *kilometer* is a unit of measurement (39.37 inches). *Barometer* means a contrivance for measuring atmospheric pressure. The *-meter* in *barometer*, *chronometer*, *pedometer*, and *speedometer* is an instrument for measuring.

Words beginning with *kilo-* (1,000) are never accented on the second syllable. It would be utterly fantastic to say “kill-AH-gram” for *kilogram*, “kill-AH-suh-k’l” for *kilocycle*, or “kill-AHL-uh-ter” for *kiloliter*. It is obvious, therefore, that “kill-AH-mit-er” is a malformation that has no validity or sanction.

Accent *kilometer* on the first and third syllables:

KILL’-oh-MEE-ter

KINDERGARTEN, NOUN. *A school for young children.*

The first kindergarten was established (1837) in Blankenburg, Germany, by the educator Friedrich Froebel. It was his theory that children from four to six years of age should be educated through the agency of play. He coined the name from the German *kinder* ("children") and *Garten* ("garden").

In popular speech, the word is pronounced "KIN'-dee-GAHR-d'n," but this has no dictionary support. The second syllable should be "der," to rhyme with *her*. The last syllable begins with "t," not "d":

KIN'-der-GAHR-t'n

KOWTOW, VERB. *A gesture of deep reverence.*

Kowtow (also spelled *kotow*) derives from the Chinese *k'o-t'ou*, meaning "knock head." The kowtow is performed in a kneeling position, and the forehead is knocked on the ground; hence, figuratively, "to toady," or "to be obsequious to someone, usually a superior."

Not until recently have the dictionaries recognized the universal American pronunciation which rhymes *kowtow* with *how now*. The older dictionaries gave sanction only to "koe-TOW," to rhyme with *go now*, and placed the accent on the second syllable. It is doubtful whether "koe-TOW" ever had any currency at all, in this country at least. To hold that it is the only permissible pronunciation is unrealistic in the extreme.

Correct U.S. pronunciation: kow-tow

LABORATORY, NOUN. *A place where scientific studies and experiments are conducted.*

Not "LAB'-uh-TAW-ree."

This word has five syllables. Pronounce them all:

LAB'-oh-ruh-TOE-ree

LAGNIAPPE, NOUN. *A gift of small value.*

Lagniappe is said to be of Creole origin.

In the South, Louisiana especially, *lagniappe* is a small gift of inconsequential or picayunish value received from

tradespeople when a purchase is made, as a few pieces of cheap candy given to the child of a customer.

The first syllable rhymes with *man*, the second syllable with *map*:

lan-YAP

(See PICAYUNE, page 202.)

LAMBASTE

Question: Is this a good word to use?

Answer: No. It is slang. In popular speech it is mispronounced "LAM-bast."

The accent should be on the second syllable, which rhymes with *haste*, *waste*:

lam-BAIST

LAMENTABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Sorrowful; grievous.*

Do not stress the second syllable, as "luh-MENT-uh-b'l."

The first syllable, which rhymes with *dam*, receives the accent:

LAM-ent-uh-b'l

LARYNX, NOUN. *An organ in the throat producing the voice.*

Not "LAHR-niks."

The "a" in the first syllable is flat as in the *ar-* of *arrogant*:

LAR-ingks

LAUD, VERB. *To praise; applaud; glorify.*

Occasionally, *laud* is pronounced "loud," to rhyme with *cloud*. Avoid this; the word should rhyme with *Maud*, *awed*:

lawd

LEGUME, NOUN. *An esculent vegetable.*

Not "luh-GOOM."

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: LEG-yoom

Second choice: lee-GYOOM

LENGTH

STRENGTH

Although the pronunciations "len'th" and "stren'th" are frequently heard, no modern dictionary to my knowledge sanctions the dropping of the "g."

That these mispronunciations have long disturbed expo-

nents of correct speech is indicated by a *Pronouncing Lexicon*, dated 1880, in which the author, a noted speech authority of his day, warned against "the vulgar and inelegant len'th and stren'th" as ". . . indisputable evidence of a deplorable illiteracy and a woeful lack of refined taste!"

In the face of that stern indictment, the guilty among us will surely hasten to restore the missing "g" to its rightful place between the "n" and "th":

Correct pronunciations:

length: lengkth
strength: strengkth

LENIN

Do not say "LEN-in."

Bird's-eye view: Lenin was the founder and leader of the U.S.S.R. He was President of Russia from 1917 to 1924. His mummified body lies on display in Red Square, Moscow.

Correct pronunciation:

I'YEH-neen

LEVER, NOUN. *A bar used in prying.*

Best usage rhymes the first syllable of *lever* and *leverage* with *fee*, see:

lever { *first choice: LEE-ver*
second choice: LEV-er
leverage { *first choice: LEE-ver-idge*
second choice: LEV-er-idge

LIABLE, ADJECTIVE. *Responsible; answerable.*

It is doubtful if many speakers have ever pronounced this word otherwise than "LY-b'l." But *liable*, as all dictionaries will show, has no fewer than three syllables. The average person always pronounces *liable* correctly when it is part of the word *reliable*.

Be sure to give *liable* three distinct syllables. Accent the first, which rhymes with *dye*, *rye*:

LY-uh-b'l

(Note: Do not confuse the words *likely* and *liable*. It is incorrect to say: "He is liable to go far.")

Likely expresses probability. *Liable* stresses the idea of answering the unpleasant consequences of an act.

How to use the words: "He is *likely* to go far." "Speeding renders one *liable* to arrest."

LIAISON, NOUN. *A linking; a binding together.*

Liaison will be a new word to many readers, but since it will be seen and heard frequently in connection with news stories of military affairs, it should be added to our vocabularies.

The word is French. In military parlance, *liaison* refers to the intercommunications maintained between different army units.

The first-choice pronunciation is as the French say the word. The "n" is nasalized, as in *bon, mon, ton*. The nasal sound is indicated by an "n" in parentheses. Accent the third syllable:

lee-ay-ZAW(N)

The second choice is the Anglicized version. The second syllable is accented. Since the French pronunciation is difficult for the average person, this book recommends the English pronunciation, especially since the word is now considered to be part of the English language:

lee-AY-zun

Also: LEE-uh-zahn

LIBRARY, NOUN. *A place where books are kept; a collection of books.*

There are two prevalent mispronunciations of this important word, and most of us, I fear, are guilty of one or the other: "LY-buh-ree" or "LY-bree."

According to the dictionaries, the second syllable rhymes with *hair*, and should receive almost as much stress as the first syllable. No authority sanctions the dropping of the first "r," nor making this a two-syllable word.

There is only one authorized pronunciation for United States use:

LY-brair-ee

LICHEN, NOUN. *A kind of moss.*

Do not rhyme *lichen* with the word *kitchen*.

In pronunciation, *lichen* is exactly like the word *liken*:

LY-ker

LICORICE, NOUN. *A European plant; a flavoring extract.*

This word is almost universally mispronounced "LIK-rish," yet every American dictionary consulted shows *licorice* as a three-syllable word.

The first syllable rhymes with *sick*; the second, or "o," syllable is like the interjection *oh*; the third syllable rhymes with *miss*, *hiss*:

LIK-oh-riss

LIEUTENANT, NOUN. *A commissioned officer next in rank below a captain.*

The first-syllable, "u," in American usage, is usually "oo," as in *loot*:

loo-TEN-unt

A reader asks: "Is it true that the English say 'leff-TEN-unt,' and if so, why?"

Yes, in England the word is spelled as we spell it, and the correct British pronunciation is "leff-TEN-unt" when speaking of the army rank, but not even the *Oxford Dictionary*, English edition, knows why. The *Oxford* devotes many lines of fine print to rather feeble speculation, which finally arrives exactly nowhere with the admission: "The origin is difficult to explain."

It is my theory that the "leff" pronunciation might have become current in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the word was variously spelled *lieftenant*, *lyeftenant*, and *luftenant*. But I have no explanation for the fact that in the British navy, *lieutenant* is not "leff-TEN-unt," but "loo-TEN-unt!"

LILAC, NOUN. *A garden shrub with fragrant purplish flowers.*

In a newspaper release not long ago, I gave the correct pronunciation of *lilac* as "LYE-luk," explaining that the "a" of the second syllable is obscured, as in the word *sofa*; hence the phonetic spelling "luk."

Scores of readers wrote to tell me that I had erred. The pronunciation is "LYE-lak," they insisted.

The reader is invited to refer to any American dictionary that uses Noah Webster's system of diacritical symbols. It

will be seen that the "a" in the pronunciation of *lilac*, *sofa*, *alike*, *alive*, and *alone*, is an italic and not a Roman "a."

This device is used by dictionaries to indicate an obscure or neutral vowel sound. You will find an italic "e" in the pronunciation of *golden*, an italic "i" in the pronunciation of *evidence* (EV-uh-denss), an italic "o" in the pronunciation of *connect* (kuh-NEKT), and an italic "u" in *circus*.

In all these words, including *lilac*, the sound of the italicized vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* is virtually indistinguishable from the "uh" sound, as in *luck*.

In the pronunciation section of *Webster's New International Dictionary*, second edition, page xlii, paragraph 91, we find: "Between certain consonants . . . this 'æ' sound may disappear entirely, as in *mortal* (mor-t'l), *final* (fi-n'l), *caudal* (cau-d'l), *nasal* (na-s'l). . . ."

Please confirm this carefully, for I do not wish the recommendations of this book ever to cause confusion among its readers. In every instance, the pronunciations and usages reported here have the support of the preponderance of the accepted American dictionaries.

I must repeat that *lilac* is neither "LYE-lak" nor "LYE-lahk," to rhyme with *my sack* and *my sock*. All dictionaries show the pronunciation to be exactly as it is spelled here phonetically:

LYE-luk

LINGERIE, NOUN. *Linen goods collectively.*

The reverberations of this article will shake the silk-underwear industry to its very foundations (no pun intended), for the word *lingerie* does not and cannot describe silk underwear nor anything else made of silk!

Impossible? Incredible? Inconceivable? Not at all.

The French word *linge* means "linen," and *lingerie* means "linen in general"; "the place where one stores linen," as the linen closet of a hotel, hospital, or school; and "women's linen clothes." But our use of the word to mean women's "silk underwear" is described by *Webster's* as "a common commercial misuse."

So far, the popular pronunciation, "LAHN-juh-ray," has very little sanction.

The English pronunciation in best usage is similar to the French la(n)zh-REE. The French nasal sounds never occur in English words borrowed from the French. I should not advise my readers to attempt the French pronunciation of *lingerie*. The pronunciation that follows now prevails in good radio usage:

LAN-zhuh-ree

LITERALLY, ADVERB. *True to the fact; actually; not figuratively.*

Do not say "LIT-ruh-lee." The word has four syllables; pronounce them all:

LIT-er-uh-lee

Question: In a newspaper account, the commander of the *Graf Spee*, in describing the running battle of the German pocket battleship with British ships, was reported to have said: "We were *literally* between the devil and the deep blue sea." Will you please comment on this use of *literally*?

Answer: The commander should have said: "We were *figuratively* between. . . ." As a matter of record, during the famous battle, the *Graf Spee* was between the shores of Uruguay and the British cruisers; the deep blue sea was far beyond. How, then, can the word *literally*, which means "actually," "according to the facts," be anything but a misstatement?

From a recent best-seller: "She said, 'I was literally petrified with fear.'" This is pretty loose writing, for any woman who had been actually turned to stone would forever remain as silent and as immobile as the Sphinx.

There is no word so rudely manhandled today as *literally*. Some writers defend the use of *literally* in the meaning of *figuratively*, declaring it to be a correct and permissible hyperbolism. Well, a *hyperbole* (hy-PER-boe-lee) is "a rhetorical figure that makes an extravagant, unbelievable, and inconsistent exaggeration of the true facts." How, then, can so straightforward and literal a word as *literally* be properly used as a hyperbole?

No. It simply does not make sense. There is no law against exaggeration, but why affirm the truth of an untruth by an-

other untruth? There is neither rhyme nor reason in canceling the indispensable word in its true and *literal* meaning from our language.

LITERATURE, NOUN. *Literary productions.*

Americans generally are addicted to the vulgarism "LIT-uh-cher," but our impeccable British cousins are not above an equally thorough job of word-slaughter. The beautiful combination of sounds which falls from the average British lip is something like "LIT-rich-wah."

Literature has two fellow victims in the words *miniature* and *temperature*. On every hand, the sensitive ear is assaulted with "MIN-uh-cher" and "TEM-puh-cher." Surely these three words are of sufficient importance to warrant the small extra effort required to pronounce all the syllables and to pronounce them correctly.

In advertising circles, the word *literature* is used to mean "any printed matter, booklets, pamphlets, and the like." This usage, declare the dictionaries, is a colloquialism.

Question: How can it be said that a person has no temperature?

Answer: Strictly speaking, a person with no temperature would be as cold as absolute zero, or, to be exact, 459.6 degrees F. below zero.

The word *temperature*, however, is loosely used to mean any body heat above the normal, which is, in the mouth of an adult, 98.6 degrees F. The expression "running a temperature" commonly describes a feverish condition. It is a colloquialism, but one that is firmly established by long usage.

(*Note:* The temperature of the sun at the surface is about 6,000 degrees C. At its center, it is supposed to be 40,000,000 degrees C., the most colossal fever in the solar system.)

The *-ture* of these words may be pronounced either "cher" or "tyoor"; the former perhaps is heard more often in unaffected speech:

First choice	{	<i>literature:</i>	LIT-er-uh-cher
		<i>miniature:</i>	MIN-ee-uh-cher
		<i>temperature:</i>	TEM-per-uh-cher

Second choice	<i>literature:</i>	LIT-er-uh-tyoor
	<i>miniature:</i>	MIN-ee-uh-tyoor
	<i>temperature:</i>	TEM-per-uh-tyoor

LONGEVITY, NOUN. *Long life; tendency to live long.*

The “g” must not be hard, as in the word *longer*. Do not say: “lawng-GEV-uh-tee.”

The first syllable has the “ah” sound; the second syllable has the “j” sound of *jetty*:

lahn-JEV-uh-tee

LONG-LIVED, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to a long life.*

In *long-lived*, the “i” is long as in *dive*, *hive*, *strive*, not short as in *river*. Both words receive equal stress:

LAWNG-LIVED

LOS ANGELES, PROPER NAME. *The largest city of California.*

On a still August morning in 1769, the Indian inhabitants of the squalid tribal village of Yang-na peered sleepily and apprehensively from their huts as a Spanish expedition from San Diego, led by Gaspar de Portola, marched into the settlement and claimed it for the Spanish crown.

The wonder of the simple Yang-nans grew apace when the expedition’s rotund priest, Father Juan Crespi, rechristened the village *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles*, “The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels!”

And until this good day, the inhabitants of *Los Angeles* are still bewildered as to which pronunciation to use:

lahss AN-juh-luss

lahss AN-juh-leez

lahss ANG-gluss

lahss ANG-el-eez

lahss ANG-jel-eez

loess AHNG-hay-laiss

or the first-choice pronunciation of most authorities, as described in this verse of unknown authorship:

The Lady would remind you, please,

Her name is not Lost Anjie Lees,

Nor Anjie anything whatever.
 She hopes her friends will be so clever
 To share her fit historic pride,
 The "g" shall not be jellified.
 "O" long, "g" hard, and rhyme with yes—
 That's all about *Loess ANG-el-ess*.

P.S. I still think that Yang-na is a pretty name.

LOUISIANA, PROPER NOUN. *One of the South Central States of America.*

Do not say "LOO-zee-AN'-uh."

In 1682, Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, took possession in the name of France of what is now popularly known as the Pelican State, and called it *Louisiana*, in honor of Louis XIV.

Louis le Grand ("the Grand") became King of France at the age of five and ruled until his death, in 1715. He made good the boast: "*L'état c'est moi*" ("The State is I"), for his was a seventy-two-year reign, the longest in European history.

The French name *Louis* is not pronounced "LOO-iss." The final "s" is silent, and the accent falls on the second syllable:

loo-EE

The name *Louisiana* has five syllables; accent the second and fourth:

loo-EE-zee-AN'-uh

Note: New Orleans is not "noo AWR-linz," "noo awr LEENZ," or "NYAW-linz." The correct pronunciation is:

nyoo AWR-lee-unz

LUFTWAFFE

Luftwaffe is a German compound of *Luft*, "air," and *Waffe*, "weapon," "arm," "tooth," "fang." It is a general term for the Nazi air force, but the word should not be used in the meaning of "air attack" or "air warfare." Do not say: "The Nazis launched a *Luftwaffe*," but: "The Nazi *Luftwaffe* launched an attack."

The word has three syllables; the first receives the accent and has the "ö" sound of *book*, *foot*. The "w" has the sound of "v":

LOÖFT-vah-fuh

LYCEUM, NOUN. *An organization or place devoted to lectures, concerts, education.*

Do not say "LY-see-um." As in *museum*, the second syllable receives the accent:

ly-SEE-um

MADAME or MADAM?

Question: What is the difference between *madame* and *madam*?

Answer: *Madame* is the French title given to married women. *Madam* is the English form and is spelled without the final "e."

Neither word should be pronounced "MAW-dum" or "muh-DAWM," as is frequently heard in women's shops, although the titles *madam* and *madame* may be properly used in addressing a woman customer whose name and marital status are not known. It is also correct to address a woman presiding officer as "madam chairman."

In *madam* the first syllable is accented and has the exact sound of the word *mad*:

MAD-um

In *madame* the accent shifts to the second syllable, which is like the word *dam*. Use the flat "a" sound of *mad* in the first syllable:

ma-DAM

The plural of *madam* is *madams*, pronounced: MAD-umz. The plural of *madame* is *mesdames*, and is pronounced, not "MEZZ-daimz," but: may-DAM. Both "s's" are silent.

Ma'am, *mom*, *mum*, and *'m*, as in *yes'm*, are but shortened forms of *madam*. In the British Court, *ma'am* is the correct title in addressing the queen and royal princesses.

Note: Since *mademoiselle* is a strictly French title, it is best to use the French pronunciation:

mad-mwah-ZELL

or, colloquially:

mam-ZELL

MAESTRO

This Italian word means "master," "teacher." Properly pronounced, it is a word of three syllables.

The commonly heard "MICE-troe" is so firmly fixed in the

American vocabulary, indeed, in the highest musical circles, that it is doubtful if it will ever be supplanted by the correct:
mah-ESS-troe

MARASCHINO, NOUN. *A liqueur of cherry juice.*

Do not say "MAIR-uh-SHEE'-nuh."

The "ə" in the first syllable is flat, as in *arrogant*. The "sch" has the sound of "sk." Rhyme the last syllable with *toe*:

MAR-uh-SKEE'-noe

MARIJUANA, NOUN. *The hemp plant (cannabis sativa). Also spelled marihuana and mariguana.*

Do not say "Mary Wanna."

In India and other countries of the East where the weed is smoked, chewed, or drunk in a brew, *marijuana* has long been known as *hashish* (HASH-eesh), which, appropriately, has given us the word *assassin*, from the Arabic *hash-shashin*, "hemp eaters."

The dried leaves of the plant, especially when smoked, produce a decidedly intoxicating effect and often induce violent, though temporary, insanity. The most common effects, smokers of "reefers" say, are a great sense of unreality, the inability to judge either time or space, and a complete lack of moral responsibility.

In the United States the growth, possession, or sale of the plant is a violation of the Federal narcotics law. Marijuana is not used by druggists in the manufacture of medicines, but experiments are being conducted to determine if the drug can be put to any useful purpose.

Traffic in the forbidden marijuana is difficult to stamp out. No special knowledge is required to prepare the sinister weed. A few plants, sufficient to corrupt a regiment, may be grown in any back yard, empty lot, or between rows in a cornfield.

Accent the first and third syllables. The "a's" are broad as in *father*. The "j" has the sound of "h" strongly aspirated:

MAH-ree-HWAH'-nah

MARITAL, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to marriage.*

A very amusing error results from confusing *marital* with *martial*. A radio speaker with a penchant for high-sounding

but inaccurate phrases recently advised newly married couples to cultivate a "real martial spirit!"

The speaker didn't mean exactly what his words implied, since the word *martial* means "warlike," "pertaining to those engaged in battle." However, some matrimonial relationships may truthfully be described as "martial," as our divorce courts will sadly affirm.

The speaker should not have removed the "i" of *marital* from between the "r" and "t" and placed it in the third syllable.

Two pronunciations are sanctioned. The first choice accents the first syllable, which has the flat "a" sound of *man*; the second choice accents the second syllable, which rhymes with *dye, eye*.

First choice: MAR-uh-t'l

Second choice: muh-RY-t'l

MARQUEE

MARQUIS

MARQUISE

These words are often confused as to meaning and pronunciation. *Marquee* is a canopy, such as is found over an entrance of a hotel or theater.

Marquis is a nobleman next in rank above an earl or count and below a duke.

Marquise is the wife of a marquis.

Correct pronunciations:

marquee: mahr-KEE

marquis { English: MAHR-kwis
French: mar-KEE

marquise { English: mahr-KEEZ
French: mar-KEEZ

LA MARSEILLAISE, FRENCH. *The title of the national anthem of France.*

Do not say "luh mahr-suh-LAIZ."

On August 10, 1792, a band of men marched from Marseille (mar-SEH-yuh) to Paris to aid in the Revolution. As

they entered the city, the streets rang with the words and music of a new and exciting song:

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
(Come, children of the fatherland,)

Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
(The day of glory is here!)

The electrifying song of the newcomers outstripped the wind, and *La Marseillaise* was adopted forthwith as the marching song of the Revolution. It is still the most stirring of all national airs. The author was a French captain, Rouget de Lisle (roo-ZHAY duh LEEL).

Mar- should rhyme with the first syllable of *arrogant*. The second syllable is similar to the English word *say*. The third syllable rhymes with *fez* and receives the accent. The two "I's" have the sound of "y":

lah mar-say-YEZZ

Question: What was the motto of France, what do the words mean, and how are they pronounced?

Answer: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité!* originated as the rallying cry of the French Revolution. The words mean: "Liberty, equality, fraternity."

Correct pronunciations:

liberté: lee-bair-TAY
égalité: ay-gal-ee-TAY
fraternité: fra-tair-nee-TAY

MARY MERRY MARRY

If asked to pronounce these three words, the average speaker is almost sure to say: "merry," "merry," "merry," giving to each the sound of *berry, ferry, Perry*.

Best usage, however, gives to *Mary* the long "a" sound of *May*. The first syllable of *merry* is correctly pronounced "mair," to rhyme with *fair, hair*. But the "a" of *marry* is the flat "a," as heard in *arrogant, man, hat*.

These three vowel sounds will be carefully distinguished by thoughtful speakers.

Mary: MAY-ree

merry: MAIR-ee

marry: MAR-ree

MASSACHUSETTS, PROPER NOUN. *One of the New England states.*

Although it is frequently heard, the pronunciation "MASS-uh-TOO'-sets" has no sanction whatever. It is obvious that *chu* does not and cannot spell *too*.

The name *Massachusetts* is from the Algonquin word *mas-sa-adchu-es-et*, meaning "about the big hill."

Bird's-eye view: Massachusetts, the Bay State, was one of the first English colonies; it was among the thirteen original states forming the American Union. Until 1819, it included the area which now is the State of Maine.

Massachusetts is the second most densely populated state in the Union. It was the first colony to establish a college, Harvard, in 1636. Boston, the capital and largest city, is in about the same latitude as Rome, Italy.

Correct pronunciation:

MASS-uh-CHOO'-sets

MASSACRE, NOUN. *The slaughter of helpless persons.*

This word is from the Old French *maçacre*, which meant "shambles," "slaughter."

The third syllable should not rhyme with *free*, as "MASS-uh-kree," although that pronunciation is widely heard. It should rhyme with *her*.

Correct pronunciation:

MASS-uh-ker

MATÉRIEL

Question: I notice that army men use *matériel* to designate war supplies. Is this pronounced like the English word *material*?

Answer: This is a French loan word. It has kept its French pronunciation. Accent the last syllable, which rhymes with *bell*:

ma-tay-ree-ELL

MAYONNAISE, NOUN. *A dressing for salads, fish, etc.*

Not "MY-uh-naiz."

Rhyme the first syllable with *bay, day*; accent the third syllable:

may-oh-NAIZ

MEASURE

NOUN. *Dimensions or capacity.*

VERB. *To ascertain by measuring.*

It is noted of late that the word *measure* is being widely mispronounced, especially by broadcasters, who, for reasons of their own, prefer this stately inaccuracy: "MAY-zhoor."

I must admit that "MAY-zhoor" is rather high-sounding; I am also forced to admit that it is an entirely erroneous pronunciation, as any good dictionary will affirm.

Equally incorrect are "PLAY-zhoor" for *pleasure*, and "LEZH-yoor" for *leisure*.

The proper vowel sound in the first syllable of *measure* and *pleasure* is the "eh" sound of *treasure*; the second syllable must rhyme with *per*, not with *pure*. *Leisure* has two accepted pronunciations.

leisure { first choice: LEE-zher
second choice: LEZH-er
 measure: MEZH-er
 pleasure: PLEZH-er

MELEE, NOUN. *A fight between mingled combatants.*

This word is commonly mispronounced "MEE-lee" to rhyme with *Sealy*, a pronunciation that is not supported by the dictionaries.

For a long time, this French word has been in general use among English-speaking peoples. In pronunciation, it still retains most of the original French values.

Modern American dictionaries list three acceptable pronunciations, the third of which is approximately as the French say the word.

First choice: may-LAY

Second choice: MAY-lay

Third choice (French): meh-LAY

MENU, NOUN. *The details of a meal; a bill of fare.*

The reader is advised against the prevalent "MAIN-yoo," because it is based on the false assumption that it is the French pronunciation of the word. "MAIN-yoo" is anything but French, but it is listed by some dictionaries as second choice.

Best usage rhymes the first syllable with *pen*, not with *pain*:

First choice: MEN-yoo

Second choice (dubious): MAIN-yoo

MERCANTILE, ADJECTIVE. *Having to do with or engaged in trade.*

Do you say "MER-k'n-teel," rhyming the third syllable with *feel*? Sorry, no dictionary known to me lists "-teel," even as a colloquialism. It simply does not exist so far as the dictionaries are concerned. Yet this mispronunciation is so widespread as to be almost a classic.

English words ending in *-ile* or *-ille* are seldom listed with the long "e" sound. Only a few such words in common use occur to me at the moment: *chenille*, *dishabille*, *automobile*, and *profile*, although in the last the long "i" sound (as in *file*) is first choice. "Proe-feel" is a Britishism, heard only occasionally in the United States.

Most dictionaries prefer "-ill," to rhyme with *fill*, in *domicile*, *juvenile*, *versatile*, and *volatile*. The long "i" sound of *file* is correct in *reconcile* and *infantile*.

In *mercantile*, the third syllable should rhyme with *fill* or *file*, never with *feel*:

First choice: MER-k'n-till

Second choice: MER-k'n-tile

METEOR, NOUN. *Any phenomenon in the atmosphere.*

Do not say "MEET-er" or "MEE-tee-ore," the third syllable rhyming with *core*.

The name *meteor* is loosely given to the flaming, exploding celestial visitors that occasionally flash across the skies and sometimes fall to earth. A meteor can be a whirlwind, a rainbow, a tornado, rain, hail, or dew.

The brighter shooting stars are called *fireballs*; if they explode they are *bolides* (BOE-lides); those that reach the ground are called *meteorites*.

Meteoric showers are said to result from remnants of comets through which the earth passes. Most meteors are burned to nothingness before they reach the ground.

This is a word of three syllables; the third rhymes with *her*.

Correct pronunciation:

MEE-tee-er

MEZZANINE, NOUN. *A low story between two higher ones.*

This word is frequently mispronounced "MEZ-nen," but all authorities agree that it should have three distinct syllables, although whether the last syllable should rhyme with *sin* or *seen* is somewhat debatable.

As we have borrowed *mezzanine* from the French, I favor the "ee" sound in the third syllable by analogy with such other words of French origin as *machine*, *ravine*, *nicotine*, *magazine*. The third syllable, however, should not be accented:

First choice: MEZ-uh-noon

Second choice: MEZ-uh-nin

MIAMI, PROPER NOUN. *A winter resort city of Dade County, Florida.*

Not "mee-AH-muh," as the master of ceremonies of a leading quiz program is frequently heard to say.

Even Floridians (or Floridans) are not certain how and why this Indian name came to be chosen. The Miamis, of the Algonquin tribe, were formerly of the region about Indiana. A few are still to be found in Indiana and Oklahoma.

Fontenodo, in 1575, wrote of a Florida lake named *Mayaimi* (now Lake Okeechobee). Jesuit Fathers are said to have visited the *caciques* ("chiefs," pronounced: kuh-SEEKS) of the Miamis in South Florida in 1743. The name *Miami* is reported to mean "mother," "pigeon." (*Florida*, incidentally and appropriately, means "the land abounding in flowers.")

I am indebted to the Miami Public Library for assistance in preparing this information.

The first syllable of *Miami* rhymes with *by*, *my*. The second syllable, which receives the accent, rhymes with *am*, *ham*. The third syllable rhymes with *see*, *me*:

my-AM-ee

MIEN, NOUN. *Air; manner; demeanor.*

Do not say "mine" or "main."

This word is encountered frequently in poetry and other serious writing, but it is seldom heard in conversation. Notwithstanding this, it is a word of importance, and we should know how to pronounce it correctly. It should rhyme with *seen*:

meen

This four-line poem by the English bard Alexander Pope will serve as a memory verse:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

MISCHIEVOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Full of mischief; naughty.*

This word should not be pronounced "miss-CHEE-vee-uss."

Here is a mystery: In America, one of the most prevalent bad speech habits is the telescoping of familiar words, such as: "GUV-m'nt" for *government*, "JEN-rul" for *general*, "REG-ler" for *regular*.

Why, then, does the average speaker go to the other extreme and add extra and unauthorized syllables to many words that are equally familiar? For example, "pree-VEN-tuh-tiv" for *preventive*, "ATH-uh-leet" for *athlete*, "ATH-uh-LET'-ic" for *athletic*, "uh-TAKT" for *attack*, "UM-ber-EL'-uh" for *umbrella*, "DROWN-ded" for *drowned*, are heard in the speech of many persons of better-than-average education.

There is no law that tells us how we must speak. We may pronounce as we choose. Still, it is regrettable that our choice so often is wrong.

The word *mischievous* has but three syllables. Accent the first only:

MISS-chuh-vuss

MOBILIZE, VERB. *To assemble and make ready.*

The first syllable of this word is not "mob," to rhyme with *rob*.

Mobilize is thought by many to mean "to create a mob," but its literal meaning is "to render movable." It is from the French verb *mobiliser*.

The word *mob* is a remnant of the Latin phrase *mobile vulgus*, "the fickle common people." First the noun *vulgus* was dropped. That left *mobile*, which later (about 1600) suffered an amputation and became *mob*.

Until recent years, *mob* was regarded as a linguistic horror. Dean Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, wrote of the word in the seventeenth century: "No word in our tongue is worthy of much severer reprobation. It belongs to a peculiarly odious kind of slang, not different in character from that which has given us *gent* for *gentleman*, and *pants* for *pantaloons*. *Mob* is one of the ridiculous words which I fear will in time be looked upon as part of the speech."

The doughty Dean's fears have been realized. Today *mob* is a word of complete respectability.

The first syllable of *mobilize* rhymes with *toe*:

MOE-buh-lize

MOIRE, NOUN. *A kind of watered fabric.*

Do not say "moe-RAY."

Originally, *moire* meant watered *mohair*. Indeed, *moire* is the French version of the English word *mohair*. The word is now applied most frequently to watered silk.

Correctly pronounced, *moire* is a word of one syllable. It rhymes approximately with *car*, *bar*:

MWAHR

MOLASSES, NOUN. *A thick, dark-colored sirup.*

A Massachusetts reader writes: "Recently, over the radio, I heard a pronunciation that seemed to be an affectation. Is

there any authority in the newer dictionaries for the broad "a" in *molasses*, as 'moe-LAH-sezz'?"

There is no authority in either the new or the old dictionaries for such pronouncing monkey business as this. The broadcaster apparently has just discovered the broad or medial "a" (ah) of *ask*, *last*, *half*, *dance*, *command*, *grass*, and is using it erroneously in all words that have the vowel "a": *man*, *hat*, *cab*, *fancy*, etc.

The second syllable of *molasses* must rhyme with *gas*, *mass*:
moe-LASS-ez

(See ASK, page 50.)

MOMENTO

Question: Is *momento* the same as *souvenir*?

Answer: No. *Momento* is the Spanish word for *moment*. The correct word is *memento*, pronounced:

mee-MEN-toe

MONKEY BUSINESS

Baboon: This word should not be accented on the first syllable, as "BAB-oon." Correct pronunciation: **ba-BOON**

Cebus: The organ-grinder monkey usually is the *cebus*, pronounced: **SEE-buss**

It is sometimes called the *capuchin*, pronounced:

KAP-yoo-chin

Chimpanzee: This has two accepted pronunciations.

First choice: **chim-pan-ZEE**

Second choice: **chim-PAN-zee**

Gibbon: This is neither "JIB-un" nor "jib-OON." The "g" is hard, as in *give*. Say: **GIB-un**

Gorilla: Do not say "GRILL-er" or "GRILL-uh." The name has three syllables, the first of which rhymes with *toe*:

goe-RILL-uh

Lemur: Not "LEM-yoor." The name rhymes with *schemer*: **LEE-mer**

Marmoset: Give the "s" the sound of "z":

MAHR-moe-zet

Orangutan: Note that there is no final "g." The last syllable does not rhyme with *bang*, but with *ban*, *can*, *man*:

(See ORANGUTAN, page 193.) **oh-RANG'-oo-TAN**

Primates: This is the name of the order of mammals that includes man, monkeys, and apes. Do not say "PRY-maits." The name has three syllables; accent the second:

pry-MAY-teez

MONSIEUR. *French title corresponding to Mister.*

Many readers have asked for the correct pronunciation of *monsieur*. The word is almost baffling when one attempts to indicate the pronunciation by phonetic spelling, diacritical marks, or any other known system of indicating sounds in print.

Readers are advised to seek a native Frenchman for coaching on the word. In the meantime, I strongly recommend that the uninitiated do not make themselves ridiculous by voicing any of the mispronunciations that fall from the lips of a few of America's naïve and uninstructed news announcers, commentators, and "analysts."

Do not say "MESH-er," "muh-SOO," "mahn-SOO-er," or (actually heard on a network newscast) "mass-uh-YERR!"

Say *mon-* quickly with a totally obscured vowel sound, similar to "muh" but much briefer. Do not pronounce the "n" at all. In *-sieur*, the "i" has the sound of the consonant "y," as in *ye*. The digraph "eu" is similar to the "u" of *urn*, *burn*, a sound about halfway between "uh" and "oo" and having a little of the sound of each. Important: Do not pronounce the final "r."

Approximate pronunciation:

m'-SYU

Note: Writers, do not abbreviate *monsieur* thus: "Mons." Either write the word in full or use the correct abbreviation, a capital "M" followed by a period, thus: *M. Jean Delval*.

MONTAGE, NOUN. *A process of mounting or editing pictures.*

In the parlance of photography, a *montage* is a composite (kum-PAH-zit) picture made up of several individual pictures, or, in motion pictures, several scenes superimposed one upon the other or following in rapid sequence.

Montage is a French loan word. There are three permissible pronunciations:

First choice: mahn-TAHZH

Second choice: mawn-TAHZH

Third choice (French): maw(n)-TAZH

MONTICELLO, PROPER NOUN. *Thomas Jefferson's famous house.*

Monticello is Italian for "little mount."

Bird's-eye view: Monticello stands on a mountaintop in the Blue Ridge three miles southeast of Charlottesville, Virginia.

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, and third President of the United States, was the sole architect of the house, which he desired to be "a thing of symmetry and taste."

Jefferson's ancestral home, Shadwell, burned to the ground in the winter of 1770. He saved nothing but his cherished "fiddle." Monticello, already begun, was hastily completed. The house is now preserved as a historic shrine.

Jefferson's likeness and a bas-relief (bah-ree-LEEF) of his famous house are to be found on the new "Jefferson nickel," the United States five-cent piece of latest mintage.

The name *Monticello* has two accepted pronunciations; the second is similar to the Italian:

First choice: MAHN-ti-SELL'-oh

Second choice: MAHN-ti-CHELL'-oh

MORON, NOUN. *A dull, stupid person.*

Moron comes to us, unchanged in meaning and spelling, from the Greek.

The pronunciation universally heard, "muh-RAHN," has no dictionary support.

Psychologists classify the feeble-minded in these three groups:

(1) The idiot, who can neither speak intelligibly nor attend to the simplest affairs of life. The idiot has a mental age of about two years.

(2) The imbecile (pronounced: IM-bee-sill) is higher in

intelligence (his mental age is about seven years), but cannot do any useful work.

(3) The moron, whose mental age is not more than twelve years, is limited in intelligence, but can perform useful tasks if supervised.

Moron must be accented on the first syllable, which rhymes with *toe*. The “o” in the second syllable has the “ah” sound of *don*:

MOE-rah-n

(See I. Q., page 402.)

MORPHEUS

In mythology, Morpheus, son of Somnus, is regarded as the god of sleep. Have you ever spoken of being “in the arms of ‘MAWR-fee-us’?”

The correct way to say the name is to pronounce it as a word of two syllables. Accent the first, and rhyme the second with *-cuse*, as in the noun *excuse*:

MAWRF-fyooss

MOSCOW, PROPER NOUN. *Capital of Soviet Russia.*

Attention, radio commentators and news analysts. The *-cow* of *Moscow* is not a gentle bossy; it neither gives milk nor chews a cud. The commonly heard “MAHSS-kow,” rhyming the second syllable with *how*, *now*, *cow*, is incorrect according to the best authorities.

The proper Russian spelling of the name of the Soviet capital city is *Moskva*, pronounced: MAHSS-kvah. *Moscow* is the Anglicized form current in England and the United States.

The *-cow* of *Moscow* should rhyme with *doe*, *hoe*, *toe*:

Correct Anglicized pronunciation: **MAHSS-koe**

Note: Russia is never “ROOSH-uh,” nor “RUSH-ee-uh.” The Anglicized name has but two syllables; the first is exactly like the word *rush*:

RUSH-uh

In the U.S.S.R., the country is known as *Rossiya*, pronounced: **rah-SEE-yah**

The initials U.S.S.R. do not stand for “United States of Soviet Russia.” The correct name is: “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”

Soviet is not "SAH-vee-ut." The best choice rhymes the first syllable with *toe*, and accents the third syllable:

soe-vee-ET

MOTORCYCLE, NOUN. *A two-wheeled automotive vehicle.*

The *-cycle* in this word should never rhyme with *nickel*, as "MOE'-ter-SIK-ul." A few readers will raise their eyebrows at this dictum and exclaim: "But if it is correct to say *bicycle* (BY-sik-ul) and *tricycle* (TRY-sik-ul), why is 'SIK-ul' erroneous in *motorcycle*?"

This is a point well taken. The fact is, however, that, with the exception of *bicycle* and *tricycle*, *-cyle* must always have the long "i" sound, as in *sigh*. See any late-edition American dictionary.

Correct pronunciation:

MOE'-ter-SY-k'l

MOUE, NOUN.

Question: What does *moue* mean, and how is it pronounced?

Answer: The word is French. It means "a pouting, petulant grimace." *Moue* rhymes with *coo*, *woo*:

moo

MULATTO, NOUN. *A person of mixed Caucasian and Negro blood.*

Do not say "muh-LAD-uh."

Strictly speaking, a *mulatto* is a half-breed Negro. A person of quarter Negro blood is a *quadroon*. One with an eighth Negro blood is an *octoroon*, sometimes called *mustee*. One with a sixteenth Negro blood is a *mustafina*. (See CREOLE, page 322.)

The first syllable of *mulatto* rhymes with *few*, *pew*; the second syllable rhymes with *bat*, *mat*; the third syllable rhymes with *hoe*, *toe*:

mew-LAT-toe

(See NEGRO, page 185.)

MUNICIPAL, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to a municipality.*

Not "MEW-nuh-SIP'-pul."

The second syllable receives the accent:

mew-NISS-uh-p'l

MUSEUM, NOUN. *A building where objects of art and science are preserved and exhibited.*

While all authorities agree that *museum* should not be accented on the first syllable, as "MEW-zee-um," the mispronunciation is widely current in the United States.

Museum should be accented on the second syllable:

mew-ZEE-um

Note: In Greek antiquity, a museum was a temple sacred to the Muses, the nine goddesses, daughters of Zeus, who presided over song, poetry, and the arts and sciences. Their names are: Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia, and Urania, pronounced:

Calliope: kuh-LY-oh-pee

Clio: KLY-oh

Erato: AIR-uh-toe

Euterpe: yoo-TER-pee

Melpomene: mel-PAHM-ee-nee

Polymnia: poe-LIM-nee-uh

Terpsichore: terp-SIK-oh-ree

Thalia: thuh-LY-uh

Urania: yoo-RAY-nee-uh

BENITO MUSSOLINI. *Fascist dictator of Italy.*

Do not say "buh-NIT-uh MUSS-uh-LIN'-ee" or "MEW-suh-LIN'-ee."

(*Note:* The suffix *-ini*, like the *-son* of *Johnson*, the *O'* of *O'Brien*, the *Mac* of *MacDonald*, the *de* of *de Gaulle*, the *Fitz* of *Fitzgerald*, and the *von* of *von Ribbentrop*, means "of," "from," "the son or descendant of.")

The first syllable of *Mussolini* has the "oo" sound of *mood*; *-ini* rhymes with *meanie*:

bay-NEE-toe MOO-soe-LEE'-nee

Mussolini's title, *Il Duce*, means "leader," "chief." It is pronounced:

eel DOO-chay

The name *Fascist* (pronounced: FASH-ist, first syllable rhymes with *mash*) is from *fascis*, a bundle of rods with the

blade of an ax projecting, a device dating from ancient Rome. It was borne before Roman magistrates as a badge of authority. The Italian organization which assumed control of the Italian Government after the termination of the First World War adopted the Fascist name and emblem because Fascisti (fah-SHEE-stee) are supposed "to typify obedience to the law as did the lictors in ancient Rome." (See ITALIAN, page 153.)

It may surprise you to see the Fascist emblem on the reverse of the United States ten-cent piece of latest mintage.

NAÏVE, ADJECTIVE. *Ingenuous; artless.*

NAÏVETÉ, NOUN. *Quality of being naïve.*

These words were lifted bodily from the French; meaning, spelling, and pronunciation remain unchanged.

Naïve has two syllables; *naïveté* has three. Accent both words on the last syllable:

naïve: nah-EEV

naïveté: nah-eev-TAY

NAPE, NOUN. *The back part of the neck.*

The average speaker not only mispronounces the word *nape* as "nap," to rhyme with *cap*, but misuses it as well in the common expression "the nape of the neck."

Since the meaning of *nape* is "the back part of the neck," to use the expression "the nape of the neck" is to say literally: "the back part of the neck of the neck." Simply say "the nape."

The "a" in *nape* has the long sound ("ay") as in *ape*, *cape*, *tape*:

naip

NAUSEATE, VERB. *To sicken; to feel violent disgust.*

Not "NAW-zee-ait."

The second syllable is not "zee"; it is either "shee," or "see."

First choice: NAW-shee-ait

Second choice: NAW-see-ait

NAZI, NOUN. *A member of the German National Socialist party.*

ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to the Nazis.*

Nazi is a shortened form of the German word *Nationalsozialistische* (from *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*). The word Nazi is not used by Adolf Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf*.

Do not rhyme Nazi with “jazzy.” The “a” has the sound of “ah,” and the “z” is pronounced “ts”:

NAHT-see

Note: The word *Reich*, meaning “state,” “empire,” has the German fricative “ch,” as in *ach, dich, ich*. Do not rhyme the word with *like*, nor give to it the sound of “sh” or “ch,” as in *fish* or *rich*. Say the word *rye* and end it with a “ch” made solely with the breath against the front of the hard palate:

RY(ch)

NEANDERTHAL MAN. *An early type of prehistoric man.*

Do not say “nee-AN'-der-THAWL.”

This subspecies of humanity was named for the Neanderthal Valley, near Düsseldorf, Germany, where fragments of a skull and other parts of a skeleton were found in a cave.

The Neanderthal man is estimated to have lived during the middle of the Pleistocene period, 40,000 B.C. to 20,000 B.C. He was apelike in posture and appearance, but possessed a fair degree of human intelligence, since he gave to his dead a respectful burial and was skillful in the use of flint instruments. He was a true cave man.

Neanderthal is pronounced according to German rules. Note that the “th” has the “t” sound of *tall*:

nay-AHN'-der-TAHL

NEGRO, NOUN. *A person of African descent.*

One should never say “NIG-ruh” or “NIG-ger.” Likewise, the terms *darky* and *coon* are equally offensive to colored persons. Either *Negro woman* or *colored woman* is better usage than the term *Negress*.

When the word *Negro* is correctly pronounced, it has no derogatory meaning or connotation. It is simply the Spanish word for *black*.

In the first syllable, the "e" is long as in *knee*; in the second, the "o" is long as in *toe*:

NEE-groe

(See MULATTO, page 182, and CREOLE, page 322.)

NEITHER, ADJECTIVE. *Not the one nor the other.*

The impression is prevalent in the United States that "NEE-ther" is the pronunciation of and for the common people, and that "NY-ther" is reserved exclusively for the elite of the surtax group.

Therefore, it will be quite a shock to readers at large to learn that "NEE-ther" is the unqualified first choice of the *Webster*, *Century*, *Funk and Wagnalls*, *Hemphill*, *Macmillan*, and *Winston* dictionaries. Moreover, "NEE-ther" is the better pronunciation in England. Who says so? The sacred and massive *Oxford English Dictionary* itself, an authority that no Briton ever dreams of disputing.

"EYE-ther" and "NY-ther" were but lately vigorously protested by eminent speech authorities. Indeed, in the eighteenth century, John Walker, author of the *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*, was appealed to: "Which is the correct pronunciation, 'NEE-ther' or 'NY-ther'?" He correctly replied: "NAY-ther," for, prior to 1800, "AY-ther" and "NAY-ther" were the only pronunciations accepted as correct.

One thing is certain: the average American regards "EYE-ther" and "NY-ther" as extremely affected, and, for that reason, I should advise against such usage by radio speakers who broadcast to wide audiences:

First choice: NEE-ther

Second choice: NY-ther

NIAGARA FALLS

Would you believe that the universally heard "ny-AG-ruh" is to be found in no dictionary in the land?

Bird's-eye view of America's most famous mecca for honeymooners: The falls are about one hundred and sixty feet

high. They are more than a mile wide. The Horseshoe Fall is separated from the American Fall by a small island (Goat Island).

The scenic grandeur of Niagara Falls attracts more than two million visitors annually. The hydroelectric plants powered by the falls develop about a million horsepower.

Niagara is the outlet of four of the western Great Lakes, which contain half of the fresh water of the world.

Niagara is a corruption of the original Indian name *Uneaukara*. Correctly pronounced, *Niagara* has four distinct syllables. No authority shows it otherwise:

ny-AG-uh-ruh

NICHE, NOUN. *A recess in a wall.*

This word does not rhyme with *sick*.

It should rhyme with *ditch*:

nitch

NOBLESSE OBLIGE, FRENCH.

Question: Will you please define and pronounce the phrase *noblesse oblige*?

Answer: The phrase is French. A literal translation is "nobility obligates." It means that "high station and noble birth obligate one to behavior that is honorable and noble."

Accent the second syllable of each word:

noe-BLESS oh-BLEEZH

NOËL *Christmas; yule; Christmas carol or greeting.*

Noël should not be accented on the first syllable except when it is used as a man's name: *Noel Coward*. (In this case, of course, there is no diæresis over the "e.")

When *Noël* is used to mean Christmas, accent the second syllable:

noe-ELL

NOTHING, NOUN. *Not anything; that which does not exist.*

Do you say "nothin'?"

While this common mispronunciation is generally regarded as a vulgarity, it is by no means the mark of illiteracy,

for the final "g" is dropped by many speakers in every stratum of society. Indeed, we are told, in England it is customary and fashionable to omit the final "g" in most *-ing* words.

In America, in some parts of the South, the silent "g" is a survival of the "careless elegance" of the old aristocrats. Elsewhere, it is looked upon as slipshod speech.

There are a few words, though, that defy the efforts of even the most hardened final-"g"-dropper. For example, *everything* and *anything* are seldom if ever pronounced "everythin'" and "anythin'."

Caution: The final *-ing* is really a pronounced nasal sound made by pressing the back of the tongue firmly against the soft palate, and causing the voice and breath to issue only through the nose. The ending *-ing* should never have the hard "g" sound, as in *jig*, *fig*. This peculiarity is especially marked in the Jewish accent, as "sing-ging" for *singing*.

Germans usually give to *-ing* the sound of *ink*, as "sink-ink."

In the East is noted a bad speech habit that is seldom heard elsewhere, that of pronouncing *-ing* as if it were spelled *-een*, as: "sing-een," "speak-een," "go-een."

Such faults in pronunciation are not difficult to overcome. Practice reading aloud such phrases as: "something for nothing"; "doing nothing"; "thinking of something." With a little diligence, the "g's" will soon fall easily and correctly into place at the end of the words.

Correct pronunciation:

NUTH-ing

OBLIGATORY, ADJECTIVE. *Binding; of the nature of an obligation.*

Obligatory is, indeed, a verbal curiosity in that it can hardly be mispronounced, so varied are the acceptable dictionary pronunciations.

Why *obligatory* has never been able to make up its mind where the accents should fall and how the vowels should be sounded is a complete mystery that no dictionary attempts to explain.

The pronunciations that follow indicate by their order a very slight preference:

ub-LIG'-uh-TOE-ree
 ub-LIG-uh-ter-ee
 AHB-luh-guh-TOE'-ree
 AHB-luh-GAY'-toe-ree

OBLIQUE, ADJECTIVE. *Slanting; indirect; obscure.*

Question: Does the second syllable rhyme with *Mike* or *meek*?

Answer: The rhyme with *Mike* is preferred by army drill sergeants. "Right oblique" and "left oblique" are important and difficult figures in infantry drill.

A consensus of nine dictionaries shows the following precedence:

First choice: uh-BLEEK
Second choice: oh-BLEEK
Third choice: uh-BLIKE
Fourth choice: oh-BLIKE

OF FROM WHAT BECAUSE

A careful check of the accepted dictionaries fails to find any sanction for the common mispronunciations "uv" to rhyme with *glove*, "frum" to rhyme with *hum*, "whut" to rhyme with *but*, and "be-kuzz" to rhyme with *he does*.

The vowel sound in *of*, *from*, and *what* is the "ah" of *odd*, *cog*; the "au" of *because* is either the "aw" of *law* or the "ah" of *father*.

The "uh" sound of *mud* and *hut* in these words had better be avoided by careful speakers. Even the illiterate would not be guilty of "Tum" for *Tom*, "Scut" for *Scot*, "cluz" for *clause*.

Correct pronunciations:

	<i>of:</i> ahv
	<i>from:</i> frahm
	<i>what:</i> hwaht
<i>because:</i>	{ bee-KAWZ
	or
	bee-KAHZ

Note: *Of* is said to be the only word in English in which “f” has the sound of “v.”

OFFICIAL, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to an office; one who holds office.*

The first “o” in *official* does not have the long sound, as in the popular radio mispronunciation “oh-FISH-ul.” Neither should *occasion* be pronounced “oh-KAY-zhun.” The initial “o” in both words should have the obscure “uh” sound, as in the first syllable of *connect*:

official: uh-FISH-ul
occasion: uh-KAY-zhun

OFTEN, ADVERB. *Frequently; many times.*

Do not say “AWF-ten.”

Recently published American dictionaries show *often* and *soften* with the “t” silent, as in *listen*, *fasten*, *hasten*.

However, the new *Webster's Dictionary* has this footnote under *often*: “The pronunciation *of-ten*, until recently generally considered more or less illiterate, is not uncommon among the educated in some sections, and is often used in singing.” But the pronunciation with the “t” silent is clearly indicated as the better usage by practically all dictionaries.

The “o” in the first syllable has the “aw” sound as in *law*, *paw*, *saw*:

First choice: AW-fn

Second choice (dubious): AWF-ten

Note: The admonition to omit the “t” sound is cleverly contained in a memory verse found in C. A. Lloyd's *We Who Speak English*: *

If your speech you would soften,
Be sure to say “ofn,”
For in this particular word,
As in *castle* and *listen*,
And others like *glisten*,
The “t” should be seen but not heard.

OLEOMARGARINE, NOUN. *Edible fats used as a substitute for butter.*

Four pronunciations have the sanction of modern dictionaries. The “g” has either the sound of “j” as in *gem*, or the hard sound as in *get*. The last syllable, *-rine*, rhymes either with *seen* or *sin*.

OH-lee-oh-MAHR'-juh-reen

OH-lee-oh-MAHR'-juh-rin

OH-lee-oh-MAHR'-guh-reen

OH-lee-oh-MAHR'-guh-rin

OMAR KHAYYÁM. *Persian poet of the twelfth century.*

Do not say “OH-mahr KY-yam,” to rhyme with *so far I am*.

Omar was not a tentmaker, his name was not Khayyám, and he was comparatively unknown as a poet. It was his father who was a maker of tents. Omar was renowned as a mathematician, astronomer, and free-thinker. His fame in the West as a poet came centuries after his death. To his parents he was Ghiyathuddin Abulfath 'Omar Bin Ibrahim Al- Khayyámi. I suppose the fellers called him Bill.

In Persia, Omar's most famous writing was a work on algebra. He also aided Sultan Malik-Shah in reforming the calendar.

Note: It may surprise many ardent admirers of Omar's verse that *Rubáiyat* is neither a mystic nor ineffably romantic name. *Rubáiyat* is simply an unexciting Arabic word that means “composed of four.” The title was given to Khayyám's collection of epigrams because his stanzas consist of four lines only, quatrains. The best translation of his *Rubá'is* (*The Rubáiyat*) is by Edward FitzGerald.

Rubáiyat is not “ruby yacht.”

Correct pronunciation:

First choice: roo-by-YAHT

Second choice: roo-BY-yahT

Omar rhymes with *Homer*. The “a” in the second syllable of *Khayyám* is broad (ah); accent the second syllable:

OH-mer ky-YAHM

OMELET, NOUN. *A dish made chiefly of eggs.*

It is doubtful if the average person knows that in best usage *omelet* is a word of three syllables.

"Oh, come, now," many a reader will protest, "stop pulling our legs." Yet it is a fact that the commonly heard two-syllable "AHM-let" is listed as second choice.

Incidentally, the word *omelet*, by a series of devious detours through the French, comes to us from the Latin word *lamina*, meaning "a thin layer."

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: AHM-uh-let

Second choice: AHM-let

Third choice (dubious): AHM-lit

Note: The average speaker is inclined to telescope many three-syllable words. Be sure to avoid this tendency in pronouncing such three-syllable words as:

average	general	memory
battery	grocery	meteor
busily	history	mockery
cabinet	hosiery	mystery
chocolate	idea	opera
crockery	interest	rabies
diary	ivory	restaurant
easily	jewelry	robbery
factory	leverage	sophomore
family	liable	vacuum
gallery	licorice	violet

OPTOMETRIST, NOUN. *One who examines the eyes.*

A commonly heard mispronunciation is "ahp-toe-MET-ris-t." This word should be accented only on the second, or -*tom*-, syllable.

Many persons do not know the difference between the terms *oculist*, *optician*, and *optometrist*:

(1) An *oculist* is a physician who specializes in the study and treatment of defects and diseases of the eye.

(2) An *optician* is not "an eye doctor"; he makes or deals in optical glasses and instruments.

(3) An *optometrist* examines the eyes by means of instru-

ments, appliances, and charts for the purpose of prescribing glasses. He does not "treat" the eyes, prescribe any medicine, or perform any surgery.

How to use the words: "The *optometrist* examined my eyes and found them diseased; on his advice, I consulted an *oculist*, who treated my eyes and prescribed glasses, which were made by an *optician*."

Correct pronunciation:

ahp-TAHM-uh-trist

ORANGUTAN, NOUN. *An anthropoid ape.*

A second glance at the spelling above will make it clear that the commonly heard "uh-RANG'-uh-TANG" cannot be correct.

The name comes from the Malay *oran*, "man," and *utan*, "wild." In Borneo and Sumatra, where these great apes are native, the name is pronounced "OH-rahng-OO'-tahn," the accents falling upon the first and third syllables.

In the English-speaking world, the accents move to the second and fourth syllables.

Note that the last syllable is *-tan*, not *-tang*. Some dictionaries show *-tang* as a variant, but as the word has been lifted bodily from the Malay, unchanged except for the pronunciation, the final "g" is plainly excrescent.

The "o" in the first syllable is long, as in the interjection *oh*; the "u" in the third syllable has the "oo" sound, as in *food*:

oh-RANG'-oo-TAN

ORGY, NOUN. *Drunken revelry; carousal.*

Do not say "AWRG-ee." The "g" is not hard as in *organ*; it has the soft "j" sound of *forge*.

The word *orgy*, which generally has a disreputable connotation in the language of today, had a most respectable—indeed, a sacred—origin; it is a term that originally denoted the holy rites practiced by devotees (dev-oh-TEEZ) of ancient sects. The wild dances and frenzied rituals of the orgy caused the word to be applied later to any wild or drunken revel.

Correct pronunciation:

AWR-jee

PADEREWSKI. *Polish pianist, composer, statesman.*

The spelling of the third syllable, *-rew-*, is responsible, by false analogy with *few*, *hew*, *new*, for the common mispronunciation "PAD-uh-ROO'-skee."

Bird's-eye view of the great Polish musician: Born, 1860, at Kurylowka, Podolia. Studied music at Warsaw and Berlin, and at Vienna, where he was a pupil of the renowned Leschetizky (LES-che-TITS'-kee). In 1899, he married Baroness de Rosen. He achieved world-wide fame as a pianist and composer. During the First World War, he devoted himself to his country's service, and became premier (FREE-mee-er) of Poland in 1919. His political career ended in February, 1921. Thenceforth, he dedicated his life to music. He died in 1941.

In the first syllable of *Paderewski*, use the broad "a" (ah). The third, or *-rew-*, syllable should not be pronounced "roo"; it rhymes with *chef*, *clef*. When the Polish "w" ends a syllable, it is pronounced "f".

Correct pronunciation:

Ignaz Jan Paderewski: IG-nahts Yahn PAH-deh-REF'-skee

PAJAMA, NOUN. *A sleeping or lounging garment.*

Question: What did my wife give me for Christmas, a *pair* of pajamas, a *suit* of pajamas, a *set* of pajamas, or a *pajama*? And what is the right pronunciation?

Answer: *Pajamas*, like *scissors*, *clippers*, *pincers*, and *trousers*, are looked upon as plural. *Pair of* in connection with *pajamas* is a colloquialism. Better say: "My wife gave me pajamas (or a suit of pajamas or some pajamas)."

Pajama is a Hindu word meaning "leg garment."

First choice: puh-JAH-muh

Second choice (dubious): puh-JAM-uh

PALL MALL

Not "pawl MAWL," to rhyme with *tall hall*.

Originally, *pall mall* was a game common in Europe. It was played with a mallet and a ball. Pall Mall, a street in London, is on the site of a Pall Mall Alley.

(*Note:* In the United States, the word *mall*, meaning "a

promenade," usually is pronounced "mawl," to rhyme with *ball*.)

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: pell MELL

Second choice: pal MAL

Note: Curiously enough, the word *pell-mell*, meaning "helter-skelter," derives, not from the English *pall mall*, but from the French *pêle-mêle*, meaning "confusion." *Pell-mell* is pronounced exactly as it is spelled. The accent is on *mell*.

PANAMA. PROPER NOUN. *A Central American isthmus.*

Do not say: "PAN-uh-maw."

Panama is an Indian word. It means "place abounding in fish."

Despite the strategic importance of the great United States canal which severs the waspish waist of the tiny republic of Panama, the name is scarcely ever heard correctly pronounced.

Two pronunciations have the sanction of American authorities. The third syllable in both receives the main accent; the secondary accent falls on the first syllable:

First choice (United States): PAN-uh-MAH'

Second choice (Spanish): PAH-nah-MAH'

PAPAYA, NOUN. *A tropical American fruit.*

Not "puh-PY-yuh."

The fruit of the papaya is oblong and yellow; the flesh is pulpy and contains many seeds. The fruit is eaten raw or cooked, and is said to be an aid to digestion, as it contains papain.

In *papaya* the "a's" are broad; accent the second syllable:

pah-PAH-yah

PAPYRUS, NOUN. *A tall sedge native to Egypt and adjacent countries.*

According to American dictionaries, the common pronunciations "PAP-uh-russ" and "PAY-per-uss" have no sanction.

In historic Egypt, papyrus had many uses. The fiber, stems, roots, and pith were used as fuel, utensils, sails, mats, cloth,

and, especially, writing paper. The pith was also an important article of food. Some authorities hold that the bulrushes among which the infant Moses was discovered were papyrus plants.

Papyrus and the English word *paper* are from the Greek word *papyros*, the origin of which is uncertain. *Papyrus* should be accented on the second syllable, which rhymes with *by*, *my*:

puh-PY-russ

LOUIS PASTEUR. *French chemist; originator of pasteurization.*

In the recent talking film, based on the life of the great scientist, it was noted that few members of the cast (all portraying native Frenchmen!) were able to pronounce the name *Louis Pasteur* correctly. *Louis* was heard generally as "LOO-wee." *Pasteur* was favored with as many variations as there were players, with these mispronunciations predominating: "PASS-cher," "PASS-tyoor," "pass-TOO-er." The players' farcical inability to pronounce the name of the very man the picture honored seriously marred an otherwise creditable production.

May I suggest to Hollywood that French coaches may be hired for very little money these days? May I also point out that nowhere else in the world than in the studios of Hollywood is the word *monsieur* pronounced "mesher," to rhyme with *fresher*?

Correct pronunciation:

loo-EE pass-TER

Note: *Pasteurize* should never be pronounced "PASS-cher-ize." The French *-teur* should not be confused with the *-ture* of such English words as *picture*, *feature*, *nature*. It should be pronounced "ter," as in *termite*, *terminate*:

PASS-ter-ize

(See MONSIEUR, page 179.)

PECAN, NOUN. *A large tree with a richly flavored nut.*

Two pronunciations have the sanction of the dictionaries.

In the South especially, the vowel sound is the broad "a" (ah) of *father*: puh-KAHN.

However, the second-choice pronunciation of some dictionaries rhymes the second syllable with *man*:

First choice: pee-KAHN

Second choice: pee-KAN

PENALIZE, VERB. *To assess a penalty.*

Penalize is an indispensable word in sports broadcasting, especially football. The pronunciation "PEN-uh-lize" was formerly considered incorrect, despite its popular use. "PEN-uh-lize" results from associating *penalize* with the word *penalty*, instead of *penal*, of which *penalize* is the derivative.

It is still best usage to give the first-syllable "e" the long sound as in *penal*.

PEE-nuh-lize or PEN-uh-lize

Note: *Penalty* is the only word of the *penal* group that begins with the "pen" sound.

PENELOPE. PROPER NOUN. *Wife of Odysseus.*

Do not say "PEN-uh-lope."

The beautiful and resourceful Penelope, faithful wife of Odysseus, was wooed by many suitors during the long absence of her husband. To put them off, she bade them wait until she had finished weaving a burial garment intended for her husband's aged father. Each night before retiring, she would unravel the entire product of the day's weaving.

Penelope has four syllables. Accent the second:

pee-NELL-oh-pee

PERCALE, NOUN. *A cotton fabric, usually printed.*

Question: I have been corrected for pronouncing *percale* as "per-KAL." Is it possible that I have mispronounced the word all my life?

Answer: This French word of uncertain origin is not shown as "per-KAL," to rhyme with *her pal*.

A check of the *Webster, Funk and Wagnalls, Oxford, Cen-*

tury, *Winston*, and *Macmillan* dictionaries shows two accepted pronunciations:

First choice: **per-KAIL**

Second choice: **pair-KAHL**

PERCOLATE, VERB. *To cause a liquid to filter through interstices.*

Never say "PER-kew-lait."

The vowel "u" does not occur in this word, nor in any of its derivatives. The second syllable is *-co-* and rhymes with *toe*, not "kew" as in *kewpie*:

PER-koe-lait

A peculiar phenomenon in American speech is the intrusion of a "u" sound in *percolate* and other words in which there is no "u" in the spelling. It is not unusual to hear "SIM-yoo-ler" for *similar*, "ee-SEN-choo-ull" for *essential*, "sub-STAN-choo-ull" for *substantial*, etc. And, of course, there is that erroneous extra syllable in "SKEDG-yoo-ull" for *schedule*.

Apparently this results from false association with such words as *gradual*, *mutual*, *eventual*, *factual*. At any rate, watch these words and pronounce them:

similar: **SIM-i-ler**

essential: **eh-SEN-sh'll**

substantial: **sub-STAN-sh'll**

schedule: **SKEH-jool**

(Note. Watch the word *immolate*, "to offer in sacrifice." Not "IM-yoo-late." There is no "u" in the word. Pronounce it: **IM-uh-late.**) (See U, page 248.)

PERFUME

NOUN. *A sweet, pleasant odor.*

VERB. *To give forth a sweet odor.*

Question: I hear *perfume* accented on *per-* and sometimes on *-fume*. Why is this?

Answer: *Perfume* is both noun and verb. The noun is accented on *per-*; the verb is accented on *-fume*.

How to use the word: "The PER-fume of the rose is sweet."
"The roses per-FUME the air."

Noun: **PER-fume**

Verb: **per-FUME**

Note: This accent shift from the first to the second syllable is noted in many words. For example:

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Verb</i>
CON-tract	con-TRACT
PROG-ress	pro-GRESS
CON-duct	con-DUCT
REC-ord	re-CORD

PERSIST, VERB. *To continue insistently.*

Only one of nine dictionaries consulted shows the commonly heard "per-ZIST."

Give to the first "s" of *persist* and its derivatives the sound of "s":

First choice: per-SIST

Second choice (dubious): per-ZIST

(See ABSORB, page 34.)

PERSONNEL, NOUN. *The body of persons employed in an organization.*

From the number of inquiries received about the word *personnel*, it is manifest that many readers are uncertain how the word should be pronounced.

We frequently hear *personnel* pronounced like *personal*, with the accent on the first syllable; and not infrequently the second syllable is stressed, as "per-SAHN-el."

This is a French word that has not long been acclimated. *Personnel*, and its companion word *matériel* (not *material*), should be accented firmly on the last syllable, which rhymes with *bell*, *fell*, *tell*.

Correct pronunciation:

per-suh-NELL

(See MATÉRIEL, page 172.)

PERSPIRATION, NOUN. *Process of perspiring; sweat.*

To transpose the letters of the first syllable of this word, as *prespiration*, is almost as gross an error as that made by the little-girl-next-door who declared: "I'm all covered with cold *Presbyterian*!"

Several readers have informed me that ladies never sweat.

"Horses sweat," they write, "men perspire, and ladies *glow*."

This may have been the case in the euphemistic days of the last century, but in this forthright and more athletic era, feminine sweat glands are wholly untrammelled and function healthily, if the beauty preparations advertisements of our magazines are a criterion.

The first syllable of perspiration is the *per-* of *perhaps*, *perplex*; not the *pres-* of *present*, *prestige*:

Correct pronunciation:

PER-spuh-RAY'-shun

Note: To perspire visibly is to *sweat*. To perspire invisibly, as the human body does almost constantly, is to *transpire*.

The word *transpire* should never be used to mean "to come to pass," "to happen," "to occur," as: "The accident transpired yesterday," although such usage is not uncommon among educated speakers and recognized authors.

One noted authority states: "This vile specimen of bad English is already seen in the dispatches of noblemen and viceroys." Another declares: "*Transpire* for *happen* is pathetic and grossly perverted." Still another says: "This misuse is flagrant, common, ridiculous, and really monstrous."

However, *transpire* is correctly used to mean "to become known," "to bring to light," "to pass from secrecy to knowledge," as: "The motive for his strange decision has finally transpired (has come to public knowledge)."

PETITS POIS, FRENCH. *Little peas*.

The average unilingual American will say "PET-its POYZ," a pronunciation unknown to the French.

Petits pois is a phrase that cannot be dismissed with a shrug; we see it constantly in printed menus and on the labels of cans. We should know how to use it correctly.

A reader once rebuked me for accenting the last syllable of certain French words, stating that in French all syllables receive equal stress. I have heard this point argued many times, and not infrequently by native Frenchmen who insist: "There are no accents in French."

But the trained ear catches a decided stress on the last syllable of most French words. Our dictionaries recognize this

and mark the French words accordingly. The last-syllable accent of many words adopted from the French survives to-day in English, as in *marine*, *machine*, *garage*, *bouquet*, *corsage*, *unique*.

Moreover, one of the most widely taught of all French textbooks tells us: "*Always stress the last syllable.*"

In *petits pois*, both "s's" are silent. *Pois* is "wah" preceded by "p":

puh-TEE PWAH

PHILISTINE, PROPER NOUN. *A native of ancient Philistia.*

Not "FILL-iss-tine," the third syllable rhyming with *wine*.

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: fuh-LISS-tin

Second choice: FILL-iss-tin

Third choice: FILL-iss-teen

PHOTOGENIC, ADJECTIVE. *That which affects a photographic film.*

Do not say: "foe-toe-JEE'-nik."

The English word *photogenic* has this definition in the new *Webster's*: "Producing or generating light; phosphorescent, as photogenic organs of a firefly; suitable for being photographed."

The meaning given to the word in the field of photography exactly parallels the definition of the French *photogénique*: "of or pertaining to the chemical effect of light on various material objects; that which is favorably suited to motion picture projection, as a *visage photogénique* (photogenic face')."

Rhyme the third syllable with *men*:

foe-toe-JEN'-ik

PIANIST, NOUN. *One who plays the piano.*

Question: Whenever I hear "PEE-uh-nist," I see red. If this pronunciation is really smart, I guess I am just too old-fashioned to appreciate it.

Answer: The pattern of correct speech is fairly uniform throughout the United States. Those who follow the dictates

of cultured usage invariably speak with restraint and good taste; they avoid the unusual pronunciation, even though it may seem to have an appearance of "smartness" (that over-worked and meaningless word).

For the correct pronunciation of *pianist*, the word was followed through nine modern dictionaries. "PEE-uh-nist" was the first choice of but two, the *Oxford* and the *Wyld* dictionaries, and these are published in England. The other seven dictionaries, most of which are American, list "PEE-uh-nist" as second choice, if they show it at all.

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: pee-AN-ist

Second choice: PEE-uh-nist

PICAYUNE, NOUN. *Something of insignificant value.*

The word *picayune* (from the French *picaillon*), originally was the name of the half-dime or five-cent piece. In modern use, especially in the South, *picayune* designates anything "of small or 'piddling' value." A petty or narrow person or policy is said to be *picayunish*.

Correct pronunciation:

PIK'-uh-YOON

PICTURE, NOUN. *An image, likeness, or reproduction.*

Many readers have asked for a discussion of the familiar words ending in *-ture*. "The dictionary pronunciation of *-ture* is confusing; please clarify it," they say.

In such words as *picture*, *nature*, *feature*, *furniture*, *temperature*, *miniature*, *literature*, etc., the last syllable has two radically different pronunciations, both of which are approved by the dictionaries. The *-ture* may be pronounced "tyoor," to rhyme with *pure*, or "cher," to rhyme with *her*.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* comments: "The last ('cher') is the natural pronunciation in general use by unaffected speakers in all the common words."

It can be safely said that "PIK-tyoor" for *picture*, "NAY-tyoor" for *nature*, "FEE-tyoor" for *feature*, etc., have an artificial, affected sound that is wholly unpleasing to the com-

posite American ear. This book, therefore, recommends the standard “cher” pronunciation for these and similar words, such as: *caricature, miniature, literature, temperature, curvature, forfeiture, furniture, overture, signature*:

picture: PIK-cher

nature: NAY-cher

feature: FEE-cher

Note: Do not use “cher” in *mature, immature, premature*. In these cases the dictionaries list only “tyoor,” to rhyme with *pure*.

PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE, FRENCH. *The chief article of any collection or series.*

This French phrase, familiar to all of us, has not been Anglicized. It should not be pronounced according to English rules. “Peess dee ree-ZISS-t’nss” is scandalous French.

Our language would indeed be impoverished if we were denied the thousands of French loan words for which there are no English equivalents. How could we get along without *coupon, garage, chauffeur, negligee, lingerie, chic, ensemble, automobile*?

But since the rules for pronouncing French and English are as far apart as the poles, many of us who are unacquainted with French often commit ridiculous blunders, such as “chase lounge” for *chaise longue*, “chick” for *chic*, and “horse doovers” for *hors d’oeuvres*.

When you encounter a word that appears to have a Gallic flavor, seek the aid of a good dictionary or ask a French-speaking friend to help you. This will save many embarrassing errors.

In *pièce de résistance*, the first word is similar to the P.S. at the bottom of a letter. *De* is like the word *dub* without the “b.” The first syllable of *résistance* rhymes with *day*; the second syllable rhymes with *geese*. The third, or *-tance*, syllable cannot be exactly given here because there is no sound in English like the French nasal “n,” which is indicated below by an “n” in parentheses:

p’YES duh ray-zeess-TAH(N)SS

PILASTER, NOUN. *An upright column, with capital, shaft, and base.*

Attention architects, contractors, carpenters, and masons! There is no "PIE" in *pilaster*. The word should not be pronounced "PY-lass-ter."

According to all authorities, the "i" in the first syllable is short, as in *pill*; the accent falls on the second syllable:

pil-LASS-ter

Note: The second syllable of *cornice* does not rhyme with *fish*, as "KAWR-nish." It should rhyme with *hiss*:

KAWR-niss

The "c" in *façade* does not have the sound of "k," but of "s." Be sure to say:

fuh-SAHD

The *arch-* of *architect* does not rhyme with *march*. It must rhyme with *mark*:

AHRK-uh-tekt

The commonly heard "KAHN-trak-ter," with the first syllable accented, is a colloquialism. Place the accent on the second syllable, thus:

kun-TRAK-ter

(See ARCHITECT, page 47.)

PIMENTO or **PIMIENTO**, NOUN. *The Spanish paprika, used for stuffing olives.*

Question: Which is correct, *pimento* or *pimiento*? I have noticed both.

Answer: *Pimento* is the Anglicized version of the Spanish *pimiento*. Either is correct; the first, however, is the form most frequently used in the United States, except, perhaps, in California:

pimento (English): **pim-EN-toe**

pimiento (Spanish): **pee-MYEN-toe**

Note: The pronunciation of *paprika* is:

First choice: **PAP-ri-kuh**

Second choice: **pap-REE-kuh**

PINCE-NEZ, NOUN. *Eyeglasses that grip the nose.*

Pince-nez is French for "pinch the nose."

The Anglicized pronunciation is:

PANSS-nay

In the French pronunciation, the “n” in *pince* is strongly nasalized; -*nez* receives the accent.

pa(n)ss-NAY

PINCERS, NOUN. *An instrument used for gripping things.*

If two persons should set upon you simultaneously (SY-mull-TAY'-nee-uss-lee) and pinch you, each with a pair of pliers, your assailants might properly be termed a *pair of pinchers*. But the instrument of torture would be a *pair of pincers*.

The large claws of lobsters, crabs, and other Crustacea, are correctly called *pincers*.

Likewise, the military maneuver against an enemy column to close it off from both sides is known as a *pincers movement*.

Note that there is no “h” in the second syllable.

Correct pronunciation:

PIN-serz

PISTACHIO, NOUN. *A tree of Southern Europe noted for its greenish edible seed or nut.*

Not “pis-TASH-yuh.”

The “a” in the second syllable has either the “ah” sound of *father*, or the “ă” sound as in *hash*. The final “o” is “oh,” not “uh.”

First choice: pis-TAH-shee-oh

Second choice: pis-TASH-ee-oh

PLAIT, PLEAT, or PLAT?

The meaning of these three words is virtually the same. *Pleat* and *plat* apparently are variations of *plait*, but some confusion exists as to the correct usage.

The dictionary doesn't give us much to go on, but it does indicate that *plait* is the best choice of the three words. However, *pleat* is most generally used for the folds in cloth, and *plait* or *plat* for a braid of hair.

Plait should not be pronounced “plat,” to rhyme with *hat*. We should use the long “a” (ay) sound, as in *play*:

plait: plait

pleat: pleet

plat: plat

POEM, NOUN. *A composition in verse.*

Poem is not a one-syllable word like *dome*, *home*, *lome*. It has two distinct syllables, like the word *poet*. Change the "t" of *poet* to "m," and we have *poem*, the product of the *poet*.

Correct pronunciation:

POE-em

POIGNANT, ADJECTIVE.

The "g" should not be pronounced.

The word is from the Latin *pungere*, "to prick," "to sting." *Pungent*, too, comes from *pungere*.

Poignant means "acute," "piercing," "deeply moving," as: "poignant grief," "poignant satire," "poignant wit."

There are two authorized pronunciations:

First choice: **POYN-y'nt**

Second choice: **POY-n'nt**

POPOCATEPETL. *A famous dormant volcano near Mexico City.*

Do not say "POE-puh-KAT'-uh-pit-t'l."

The name of the shapely, snow-covered cone is from the Aztec *popoca*, "to smoke," and *tepetl*, "mountain." Mexicans generally use the affectionate diminutive *Popo*. It is the second highest summit in Mexico (correct Spanish pronunciation: MAY-hee-koe), rising to a height of 17,876 feet.

It is believed that "Popo" was first ascended by Diego de Ordaz in 1519.

Popocatepetl is accented on the second and fourth syllables:

poe-POE-kah-TAY'-pet'l

Note: The name of the California city *Monterey* is spelled with one "r."

The name of the Mexican city in the State of Nuevo León is spelled with two "r's":

Correct pronunciations:

Monterey: **MAHN-tuh-RAY'**

Monterrey: **MONE-tair-AY'**

PORTE-COCHÈRE, NOUN. *A carriage porch.*

Do not say "PORE-tee kuh-SHEAR."

Porte rhymes with *fort*; *cochère* rhymes with *go there*:

port-koe-SHAIR

PORTIÈRE, NOUN. *A curtain hanging across a doorway.*

The commonly heard "pawr-TEER" is not listed by dictionaries even as a colloquialism.

Although this French loan word has been in English dictionaries for many years, its pronunciation is still not Anglicized. The word retains most of its French values. The second syllable rhymes with *hair*:

pore-TYAIR

POSITIVELY, ADVERB. *Extremely; certainly; obviously.*

The accent should not fall on the third syllable, as: "PAHZ-uh-TIV'-lee." The first syllable only is stressed. Say:

PAHZ-i-tiv-lee

POSTHUMOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Following after death.*

Not "post-HEW-muss." Place the accent on the first syllable which has the "ah" vowel sound. Say:

First choice: PAHSS-choo-muss

Second choice: PAHSS-tyoo-muss

PRECEDENCE, NOUN. *Priority of order; act of going before.*

Do not say: "PRESS-uh-denss."

The "Enlighten Mr. Colby Society" of Columbia University, New York, wrote to chide: "You do not know how to read the dictionary. *Webster* does not list pronunciations in order of their preference, as you seem to think!"

Sorry, but the new *Webster's* plainly states: "In the former case [meaning the pronunciation first listed] there is usually at least a slight preponderance in favor of the first pronunciation, which may be regarded as the preferred form."

I have always understood that *precedence* recognizes accepted priority; that a thing is first because it should be first.

"First choice" and "second choice" are expressions that are too well established among philologists in giving the precedence of pronunciations, spellings, and uses, to need any defense here.

In the first and second syllables of *precedence*, the "e" is long, as in *see*. The accent falls on the second syllable:

pre-SEE-d'nss

PREMIER, NOUN. *The first minister of state.*

The commonly heard "pri-MEAR" now has good dictionary sanction, although it used to be considered as dubious.

First choice: pri-MEAR

Second choice: PREE-mee-er

French: pr'm-YAY

British: PREM-yer

PREMIERE, NOUN. *The "first night" of a theatrical or motion picture performance.*

In giving to America one of the most extravagant and fantastic of modern spectacles—the *première*—Hollywood also has perpetuated the universally heard mispronunciation: "pree-MEER."

When this French word is used to mean a first-night or opening performance, the vowel sound of the first syllable is an obscure "uh," similar to the "u" of *mud*. The second syllable, which receives the accent, rhymes with *air*, *hair*, *pair*:

pr'm-YAIR

PRETTY, ADJECTIVE. *Good-looking; excellent; considerably.*

Few words in common use are so frequently mispronounced. Unless your accents are far more accurate than the average, you will say either "PUR-dee" or "PRID-dee."

The pronunciation "PRET-tee," to rhyme with *Betty*, was held in great esteem in the "high-toned" speech of the last century. But, happily, it went the way of the horsehair sofa and the sidesaddle.

Most speakers find the "t" sound difficult in *pretty* and similar words. *City*, *gritty*, *kitty*, *pity*, *witty*, and *duty* are generally pronounced "SID-dee," "GRID-dee," "KID-dee," "PID-dee," "WID-dee," "DOO-dee," and *committee* is almost always "kuh-MID-dee."

The first syllable of *pretty* rhymes with *bit*, *fit*. The "t's" should be "t's," and not "d's."

Correct pronunciation:

PRIT-tee

Question: Recently you wrote *pretty dreadful*. How can these two words make sense when used together?

Answer: *Pretty*, in the sense of “considerably,” “very,” “rather,” is a sound idiom with excellent dictionary support. Indeed, the new *Webster's* lists *pretty cold weather* as an example of the correct use of the word in this sense.

PREVENTIVE, NOUN. *A prophylactic; that which prevents illness or disease.*

Do not say “pre-**VEN**-tuh-tiv.”

It is a common error to add an extra syllable to this word. *Webster's* describes *pre-ven-ta-tive* as an irregularly formed doublet.

To form an adjective or noun from the verb *prevent*, it is necessary to add only *-ive*, not *-ative*. There is no such verb as *preventate*; hence *preventative* obviously is not valid.

Strangely enough, this mistake is frequently noted in medical journals and in writings about the prevention of illness.

Correct pronunciation:

pree-**VEN**-tiv

PRIMARILY, ADVERB. *First; fundamentally.*

The commonly heard “pry-**MAIR**-uh-lee” is not good usage. Place the accent on the first syllable:

First choice: **PRY**-mair-uh-lee

Second choice: **PRY**-muh-ruh-lee

PROCESS, NOUN. *A course of procedure.*

It is always amusing to hear British tricks of speech fall from the lips of American-born broadcasters and screen players. They apparently labor under the mistaken belief that the standard American speech pattern is something of which to be just a little ashamed.

Have you noticed of late how often the long “o,” as in *toe*, is being used in *process*, and *propaganda*, as: “**PROE**-sess” and “**PROE**-puh-GAN'-duh”?

It's all very cheerio, isn't it?

Yet, it must be pointed out, the short “ö” in *process* (**PRAH**-sess) is the first choice of the *Webster*, *Funk* and

Wagnalls, Century, Hemphill, Macmillan, and Winston dictionaries—yes, even of the great English Oxford Dictionary! And no dictionary, English or American, shows the long “o” in propaganda.

Correct pronunciation:

PRAH-sess

PRAH-puh-GAN’-duh

America’s pro-British; we
Are pleased to have it so.
But this does not demand that we
Affect the British “pro.”

PROGRAM, NOUN. *An official bulletin; a plan; a radio performance.*

I think that the unloveliest sound ever to fall from the lips of man is any one of these three almost universal mispronunciations: “PROE-gr’m,” “PROE-grum,” “PROE-gum.” I should like to add that “TELL-uh-gr’m” also is outside the pale of respectability.

To say “PROE-gr’m” and “TELL-uh-gr’m” is as absurd as it would be to say “monogr’m,” “diagr’m,” “epigr’m,” “cable-gr’m,” “anagr’m,” or to ask one’s pharmacist for a few “gr’ms” of bicarbonate of soda.

The ending *-gram* is from the Greek combining form *-gramma*, denoting “something drawn or written.” At the end of a word, it must always rhyme with *ham*, never with *hum* or *h’m*.

Program should rhyme with “Go, Sam”:

PROE-gram

Note: Since *program* is from *pro-*, “before,” and *-gramma*, “written”—hence “something previously written”—use of the word to designate “a radio performance” is obviously erroneous. But I shall not quarrel with this custom, which is well rooted in popular use.

I will, however, continue to crusade against the dreadful and slovenly “PROE-gr’m” and “TELL-uh-gr’m,” in the hope that these vulgarisms will at last be purged from the American vocabulary for all time to come. When I shall

have spent the short time allotted to me on this earth, I should like no sweeter epitaph than: "He taught us not to say 'PROE-gr'm.'"

PRONUNCIATION, NOUN. *The manner of pronouncing words.*

Note that the second syllable is not *-noun-*, but *-nun-*:

First choice: proe-NUN-see-AY'-shun

Second choice: proe-NUN-shee-AY'-shun

PRONUNCIATIONS FOR ELEGANT OCCASIONS

Question: Is it true that the networks have schools where announcers are taught correct pronunciation?

Answer: So I have heard. But some of the boys, I fear, play hooky; else we should not be treated to such amazing linguistic contortions as (all these were actually heard in a single evening): "NOO-ee-s'nss" for *nuisance*, "BIZ-ee-ness" for *business*, "EE-ven-ing" for *evening*, "PAHR-lee-uh-ment" for *parliament*, "am-BASS-a-dore" for *ambassador*, "REK-koerd" for *record*, "FAK-yool-tee" for *faculty*.

Generally speaking, radio announcers are a conscientious, hard-working crew. They constantly strive for perfection. But, sad to relate, a few carry their zeal to laughable extremes and, like the occasional wayward minister or absconding banker, blacken the whole craft.

In radio circles, it is admitted that the good announcer is not the one who tries to stupefy his audience with the wondrous magnificence of his pseudo-Oxford "diction," but is he who voices his words in manly, straightforward, unaffected, *American* accents.

Correct pronunciations:

nuisance: NYOO-s'nss

business: BIZ-ness

evening: EEV-ning

ambassador: am-BASS-uh-der

parliament: PAHR-luh-m'nt

record: REK-erd

faculty: FAK-ull-tee

PSYCHE. *A goddess of Greek antiquity.*

Psyche is a Greek word meaning "the soul." It is found in such words as *psychology*, *psychiatry*, *psychic*.

In Greek mythology, *Psyche*, the youngest daughter of a king, incurred the jealous wrath of Venus, whose plot to destroy the lovely maiden was thwarted by Cupid. He fell in love with *Psyche* and spirited her away.

A town in Clallam County, Washington, originally bore the name *Psyche*. The unusual combination of letters completely bewildered the townspeople. They were so persistent in the mispronunciation "pysht" (the "y" as in *my*) that the post office department yielded to the inevitable and changed *Psyche* to *Pysht*.

The French pronunciation is: psee-SHAY, with the "p" sounded. This, however, is not sanctioned for British or American usage.

We should rhyme the first syllable with *dye*. The "p" is silent.

Correct pronunciation:

SY-kee

PUERILE, ADJECTIVE. *Childish; silly; immature.*

Puerile is from the Latin *puer*, "child," "boy." The word should have three syllables:

PEW-er-ill

PUMPKIN, NOUN. *A gourdlike fruit.*

Do not say "PUNG-kun."

This word is pronounced exactly as it is spelled:

PUMP-kin

PURÉE, NOUN. *A thick soup.*

Question: Is *purée* pronounced "poo-REE"?

Answer: Not quite. The Anglicized version of this French word is:

pew-RAY

PYRRHIC VICTORY

Question: What is a *Pyrrhic victory*; and how is the first word pronounced?

Answer: A *Pyrrhic victory* is one that is gained at ruinous cost. After his defeat of the Romans (279 B.C.), Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, exclaimed: "One more such victory over the Romans, and we are utterly undone!"

The first syllable rhymes with *ear*, *hear*.

PEAR-rik

QUAY, NOUN. *An artificial landing place for boats; an embankment.*

The dictionaries tell us that *quay* means "an artificial embankment." They pronounce it: "kee." They also state that *quay* may be spelled *key*. But *key* is listed as quite another word, from the Spanish *cayo* (KAH-yoe), meaning "a low reef of shell or coral," as the keys off the coast of Florida.

Obviously *quay* is from the French *quai* (pronounced: kay). It does not mean *key* (reef or shoal), nor is the pronunciation "kee" for *quay* reasonable or customary.

Standard American: kway

Dictionary pronunciation: kee

QUINTUPLETS, NOUN. *Five offspring born of the same labor.*

The five little glamour girls of Callander, Ontario, are the stars of this article. Truly, the correct pronunciation of *quintuplets* is almost as great a rarity as the multiple birth among human beings.

Do not say "kwin-TUP-lets" or "kwin-TOOP-lets." The only accent must fall upon the first syllable. And note that the second syllable has the long "u" sound, as in *mute* (myoot); not the "oo" sound of *moot*:

Correct pronunciation:

KWIN-tyoop-lets

Note: *Dionne*, a common name in France, is not "DY-yone" or "DEE-ahn." The correct pronunciation is like "dee-UN," the second syllable rhyming with *bun*, *fun*, *gun*, but with scarcely any stress on the "dee"—almost as if it were spelled "d'yun": that is, "yun" preceded by the sound of "d."

When given their correct French pronunciations, the names of the quintuplets are:

Annette: an-NET
Cécile: say-SEEL
Émilie: ay-mee-LEE
Marie: ma-REE
Yvonne: ee-VUN

I shall pen some deathless couplets
 Warning men against "kwin-TUP-lets."

When we view this girlish group, let's
 Vow that we'll eschew "kwin-TOOP-lets."

Guard the tongue, or come a cropper;
 KWIN-tyoop-lets alone is proper.

Here's the last of all my hints, sir:
 Never, *never*, call them "quints," sir.

QUIXOTIC, ADJECTIVE. *Like Don Quixote; visionary; impracticable.*

It has been argued that because the adjective *quixotic* is from the name *Quixote* (Spanish pronunciation: kee-HOE-tay), it should be given the Spanish values and be pronounced "kee-HOE-tik."

This is false reasoning, for the word *quixotic* is purely an English invention. Spanish adjectives do not end in *-ic*. If a Spaniard compared someone to Don Quixote, he would use the adjective *quijotesco* (kee-hoe-TESS-koe).

As a matter of fact, most American dictionaries give to the name *Quixote* itself the Anglicized form "KWIK-sote," the second syllable rhyming with *dote*, *note*, as first choice.

Correct pronunciations:

quixotic: kwiks-AH-tik
Quixote { *first choice (English)*: KWIK-sote
 second choice (Spanish): kee-HOE-tay

RABIES, NOUN. *Canine madness; hydrophobia.*

Rabies is a surprise word. Never say "RAB-eez," rhyming the first syllable with the *rab-* of *rabbit*, *rabble*, *rabid*.

Thanks to Louis Pasteur (loo-EE pass-TER), whose method of treatment is universally employed as a curative or preventive, the once deadly rabies is seldom fatal to human beings if the inoculations are given promptly.

It is a mistake to think that hydrophobia is most prevalent in the "dog days" of July and August. The "dog days" refer, not to dogs, but to the rising of the Dog Star (Sirius) in the summer sky.

Dogs do not go mad because of hot weather. Rabies can and does occur in any season. The disease is transmitted only by the bite or scratch of a rabid animal.

The word *hydrophobia* is a misnomer. It means "fear of water." But a stricken dog agonizes for want of water; the poor creature's swollen throat makes drinking impossible.

Rabies is a three-syllable word. The "a" in the first syllable is long, as in *bay*; the "i" in the second syllable is short, as in *bit*:

RAY-bi-ez

(See LOUIS PASTEUR, page 196.)

RAPINE, NOUN. *Ravishment; seizing by force.*

Neither "rap-PEEN" nor "RAY-pine" has dictionary approval.

Properly pronounced, the word is a good rhyme for *hap-pen*. Accent the first syllable:

RAP-in

RASPUTIN. *Russian court favorite; the Mad Monk.*

Bird's-eye view: Rasputin was born in a Siberian village in 1871. He was assassinated in the palace of a Russian prince in 1916.

Though he had received no education, by posing as a monk, Rasputin was presented at the Russian Court, where he took up his residence and soon held sway over members of the Imperial family.

His main doctrine was: "Sin, that you may obtain forgiveness."

His full name was Grigoryi Efimovich Rasputin. The name *Rasputin*, meaning "the debauchee," was given to his

peasant father, because of his drunkenness and disorderliness.

Do not say "rass-PEWT-'n."

The vowel sound of the second syllable is the "öö" of *foot*. The third syllable rhymes with *seen*:

rahs-PÖÖ-teen

RATHER, ADVERB. *Preferably; somewhat; especially.*

Never say "ruther," to rhyme with *brother*, nor "druther," as: "I druther not go."

Authorities differ widely as to the pronunciation of *rather*. Some prefer the flat "a," as in *rat*; some favor the broad "ah," as in *father*; while others recommend the medial (or middle) "a" sound, which is about midway between the two "a's" first mentioned.

We cannot be guided by analogy, for, if we hold that *rather* must have the "ah" sound because *father* is always so pronounced, we must not forget that, in the United States, *blather*, *gather*, and *lather* invariably have the flat "a," as in *rat*.

In England, RAH-ther, to rhyme with *father*, prevails. It is also heard frequently in the United States. But since the broad "a" is not customary in the speech of about eighty per cent of Americans, the rhyme with *lather* can unquestionably be regarded as first choice. The reader is advised to use the pronunciation that is in best cultured usage in the section where he lives:

First choice: RA-ther

Second choice: RAH-ther

(See ASK, page 50.)

RATION

NOUN. *An allowance of food.*

VERB. *To allot rations.*

Ration is from the the Latin word *ratio*, which always has the long "a" (ay) sound, as in *rate*.

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: RAY-shun

Second choice: RASH-un

Note: But *rational*, *rationalism*, *rationalist*, *rationalistic*, *rationalistical*, *rationality*, *rationalization*, and *rationalizer*—all from the same Latin word—have the first syllable rhyming with *hash* as the only choice:

RASH-un-ul, etc.

REALLY, ADVERB. *In a real manner; in truth.*

The pronunciation in best usage gives to *really* three distinct syllables.

The commonly heard “REE-lee,” “RILL-ee,” and “RUH-lee” are considered by authorities to be dialectal; while the forms “REH-lee” and “RAL-lee,” supposed by certain luminaries of the stage, screen, and radio to be fairly crawling with culture, are as absurd and affected as they are wholly spurious.

The “a” in *real*, *realism*, *realistic*, *realize*, and *really* has the sound of “a” as in *sofa*, and it has a syllable all to itself:

REE-uh-lee

REALTOR, NOUN. *A real estate broker.*

This word was coined by the National Association of Real Estate Boards as a name by which to designate its members. Few realtors, however, pronounce the name correctly. It is most often heard as a two-syllable word, “REEL-tore,” the second syllable rhyming with *core*, *more*, *pore*.

According to three American dictionaries in which the name appears—the new *Webster’s*, *Winston’s*, and *Funk and Wagnalls*—*realtor* is a three-syllable word, and the preferred pronunciation rhymes -tor with *her*, *per*:

First choice: REE-ul-ter

Second choice: REE-ul-tawr

Note: The -or of such words as *factor*, *ambassador*, *legislator*, *conductor*, *director*, etc., also should rhyme with *her*, *per*, and not with *core*, *pore*.

RECOGNIZE, VERB. *To acknowledge; to express recognition.*

Do not omit the “g” in the second syllable, as “REK-uh-

nize"; nor should the second syllable rhyme with *fig*, as "REK-kig-nize."

The proper sound of -og- is a rhyme with *jug*, *mug*, *pug*:
REK-ug-nize

RECORD, NOUN. *That which has been recorded; a disk on which sounds are recorded.*

The occasionally heard "REK-awrd" is designated as a Briticism by the new *Webster's*, but the *Oxford Dictionary* does not show the "awrd" sound in the second syllable.

In the *Webster*, *Funk and Wagnalls*, *Century*, *Winston*, *Macmillan*, and *Oxford* dictionaries, the second syllable of the noun *record*, in the first-choice pronunciation, rhymes with *herd*, not with *lord*:

REK-erd

Note: The verb *record* is accented on the second syllable:
ree-KAWRD

RECUPERATE, VERB. *To recover; to regain; to restore to health.*

Do not say "ree-KOO-per-ait."

Also, do not confuse this word with *recoup* (ree-KOOP), "to reimburse," "to regain something once lost." The words are not at all related.

In *recuperate*, the second syllable is exactly like the *kew* of *kewpie*, not the "koo" sound of *coupé*:

ree-KEW-per-ait

REDINGOTE, NOUN. *A long coat worn by women.*

Question: The etymology of *redingote* puzzles me. Where did we get such a word?

Answer: You'd be surprised. Have you ever had a friend, who, after having lived abroad for a while, came home with a pronounced foreign accent? Such a friend is the word *redingote*.

Originally, it was simply the English *riding coat*. The French liked the words and adopted them, but could come

no closer to the pronunciation than “reding gote”; hence the present spelling.

To further complicate matters, the French use *redingote*, not only in the sense of “riding coat,” but also as a name for the Prince Albert, or double-breasted frock coat worn by men.

Finally, to complete the jigsaw puzzle, English and American fashion authorities eagerly appropriated the word to designate a type of coat for women, believing *redingote* to be a French word of heavenly elegance, instead of the linguistic changeling it actually is.

Correct pronunciation:

RED-ing-gote

REFUGEE, NOUN. *One who flees to a place of safety.*

Do not say “REF-uh-jee.”

The main accent does not fall upon the first syllable, although the word is scarcely ever pronounced otherwise.

Accent the last syllable, and be sure to give the “u” in the second syllable the long sound, as in *use*:

reff-yoo-JEE

REGULARLY

PARTICULARLY

Most speakers make pure Jabberwocky of these two important words. If you value precision in speech, you’ll never be guilty of “REG-lee” and “puh-TIK-lee.”

The telescoping of multisyllabic words is endemic to the United States, though not to so great a degree as in England. We should watch especially such words as *practically* (not “PRAK-tuh-klee”), *electrically* (not “ee-LEK-truh-klee”), *wonderfully* (not “WUN-der-flee”), and *beautifully* (not “BEW-tuh-flee”).

Be sure to pronounce all the syllables in these and similar words. Let us not slip into the slovenly speech habits which often make the American vernacular an offense to the ear.

Correct pronunciations:

regularly: **REG-yoo-ler-lee**

particularly: **per-TIK-yoo-ler-lee**

(See **WONDER FLEA**, page 262.)

RESERVOIR, NOUN. *A place where anything is kept in store, especially water.*

Do not say "REZ-uh-voy," nor "REZ-uh-vore."

In *reservoir*, the "r" must be plainly sounded in the second syllable, which rhymes with *her*. The third syllable has the sound of "wah," preceded by "v" and followed by "r":

Correct pronunciation (United States):

REZ-er-vwahr

RESIN

ROSIN

Question: Does the word *resin* have two pronunciations?

Answer: When the word is spelled *resin*, pronounce it:

REZZ-in

When the word is spelled *rosin*, pronounce it:

RAHZ-in

RESPITE, NOUN. *A pause; an interval of rest.*

The common mispronunciation "ree-SPITE" results from the similarity of *respite* to *despite*. Though the words are alike in spelling, there is no further resemblance between them.

Respite is accented on the first syllable, which rhymes with *less*; the second syllable rhymes with *bit*, not with *bite*:

RESS-pit

RESTAURANT, NOUN. *An eating house.*

This French word has long been Anglicized, but it is seldom given the correct English pronunciation. We hear it most often as a two-syllable word, "RESS-trunt," but the word is listed with three syllables in American dictionaries.

Note that the second syllable is like the word *toe*, and that the vowel in the third syllable is virtually obscured:

RESS-toe-r'nt

REVEILLE, NOUN. *A call, sounded by bugle, at about sunrise.*

Soldiers, "atten-SHUN!"

Steel yourselves for a shock, and remember, please, that I did not write the dictionary: The first-choice pronunciation

for the name of the famous "I-can't-get-'em-up" bugle call is not "REV-uh-lee"! (So say the elder dictionaries.)

The word *reveille* is from the French verb *reveillez*, as: *reveillez-vous!* meaning "wake up!" In the British army, *reveille* is called either "ree-VELL-ee" or "ree-VAL-lee."

While the usual pronunciation in the United States Army is "REV-uh-lee," I know from personal experience in the service that this call, especially at five o'clock on a wintry morning, is known by a number of other variations, all of them much too pungent to permit of recording here.

Of course, no American in his right mind would dream of using the pronunciation "ree-VAIL-ye," or of using either of the two British pronunciations. Follow the lead of the newer, more realistic, dictionaries, and say:

REV-uh-lee

RIBALD, ADJECTIVE. *Obscene; coarsely offensive.*

Do not say "RYE-bawld," to rhyme with *high balled*.

That this familiar and expressive word is universally mispronounced serves to remind us again that the spelling of English words is not an infallible guide to their pronunciation.

As a preparatory step to writing this article, twenty persons, selected at random, were asked to pronounce *ribald*. The twenty included:

- 1 teacher of expression
- 5 stenographers
- 4 executives
- 1 high-school sophomore
- 3 housewives
- 1 club woman
- 1 teacher of English
- 1 advertising man
- 2 newspaper writers
- 1 radio announcer

The sophomore gave the only correct answer.

Ribald must rhyme with *dribbled, nibbled, scribbled*:

RIB-b'ld

RINSE, VERB. *To wash lightly; to cleanse with water only.*

Do you *wrench* your hands, your clothes, your hair? Be warned, then, of the irreparable damage that is certain to result, for hands, hair, and fabric were not intended to be *wrenched*—that is, “pulled or strained with a violent twisting.” *Rinsing*, on the other hand, is often beneficial to all three.

There is only one authorized pronunciation for the word *rinse*: make it rhyme with *prince*, *quince*; never with *bench*, *wench*:

rinss

RIO GRANDE, PROPER NOUN. *The river that marks the boundary between Texas and Mexico.*

Do not say “RY-uh-grand.” *Rio* rhymes with *Leo*. *Grande* has two syllables. The “a” is “ah,” and the “e” is “ay”:

REE-oh GRAHN-day

As the word *Rio* means “river,” it is not correct to speak of the *Rio Grande River*. *River* is superfluous.

ROBOT, NOUN. *An automatic apparatus that replaces human effort.*

Do not say “rowboat” (actually heard in a motion picture).

The term *robot* originated in Karel Capek’s play *R. U. R.* (*Rossum’s Universal Robots*), in which mechanical workers unexpectedly developed intelligence and turned upon and destroyed their creators.

Since antiquity, man has striven to replace human effort with automatic devices, a theme that is found in many early writings: the “Open sesame!” of the cave of the Forty Thieves; the clairvoyant brazen head in the giant’s castle; Frankenstein’s monster; the automatons of Magnus, Bacon, and Descartes.

But greater miracles than these have actually come to pass with the modern invention of almost numberless robots, notably the Televox, which answers the telephone, executes orders, and hangs up when the conversation ends; the electric eye; the gyrocompass; the ship stabilizer; the Integrator, which quickly solves mathematical problems far beyond the power of any human brain; and the Voder (demonstrated at

the New York World's Fair), a machine that talks and sings in any language when certain keys are pressed.

Robot is not a word of French origin, as the spelling may suggest. It is from the Czech *robota*, "compulsory labor."

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: ROE-but

Second choice: RAH-but

RODEO, NOUN. *A spectacle like a roundup.*

A New York columnist reported that, in Texas, the Spanish pronunciation roe-DAY-oh is largely preferred to the Anglicized ROE-dee-oh. He gave as his authority several Texans who are on the staff of a New York newspaper.

I am afraid his informants have succeeded only in causing him to broadcast (innocently, of course) that which is contrary to fact. As I am a native of the Lone Star State, an ardent and loudly vocal devotee of the rodeo, and an intimate of many rodeo producers and performers, I have found the opposite to be true: ROE-dee-oh is the rule in Texas; roe-DAY-oh is only occasionally heard.

(Note: "ROE-dee-oh" is the first choice of the new *Webster* and the *Winston* dictionaries.)

Furthermore, the Spanish word *rodeo* has no connection with horses, trick roping, calf branding, or "bronco busting." The word means: (1) "the act of going around," "a circuitous way," "delay," "procrastination," "evasion," "subterfuge"; (2) "a place in a fair or market where horned cattle are exposed for sale."

In the Western United States, *rodeo* receives not only an American pronunciation but a strictly American meaning. It is, in fact, a word that has scarcely anything in common with the Spanish *rodeo* but the spelling.

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: ROE-dee-oh

Second choice (Spanish): roe-DAY-oh

ROOSEVELT, PROPER NOUN.

Question: Is there a law against pronouncing the name *Roosevelt* correctly? If not, please give us Americans a good scolding for continually saying "ROOZE-uh-velt."

Answer: Very well, America, consider yourself soundly chided for rhyming *Roosevelt* with “choose a belt.”

Apparently the American radio audience listens with only half an ear, for despite the constant repetition of the name *Roosevelt* by local and network announcers and commentators, who generally pronounce it correctly, the average speaker persists in rhyming *Roose-* with *booze, snooze*.

The name is of Dutch (not German) origin. It means “rose field.” In Germanic languages, two “o’s” have the sound of “oh,” not the “oo” sound of *noose*. The *Roose-* of *Roosevelt* should sound exactly like the word *rose*.

And it will be easier to remember “rose” if we recall the arms of the Roosevelt family: three red roses growing in a verdant field.

The name has three syllables, but the second is so lightly stressed as to be all but obscured.

Correct pronunciation:

ROZE-uh-velt
almost: **ROZE-velt**

ROUTE, NOUN. *The course or way to be traveled.*

This word is of French origin. The pronunciation to rhyme with *boot* is generally accepted as the better choice and seems to be gaining ground. However, the pronunciation to rhyme with *bout, lout, pout* is still preferred in military use, by railroad men, and by business concerns that maintain delivery routes.

First choice: **ROOT**
Second choice: **ROUT**

SABOTAGE, NOUN. *Malicious waste or destruction.*

Sabotage is an old French custom! It originated, says one authority, with the French peasants, who, in the early days of industrial development, expressed their disapproval of working conditions by casting their wooden shoes (*sabots*, pronounced: sah-BOE) into the gears of machinery to wreck it.

In addition to the meaning of “physical destruction,” this word is now used to describe any action that tends to slow or obstruct the regular process of production, such as a sit-

down strike. *Sabotage* in this sense has been made a crime by statute in several states.

The first-choice pronunciation is modified somewhat from the French. The main accent falls on the third syllable, which has the "ah" sound of *father* and the soft "zh" sound of *azure*. The second-choice pronunciation is accented on the first syllable; the third syllable rhymes with *ridge*:

First choice: sab-oh-TAHZH

Second choice: SAB-oh-tidge

Note: The word *saboteur* should not be pronounced "SAB-uh-TOO'-er." The third syllable must rhyme with *her*:

sab-oh-TER

SACRIFICE

VERB. *To renounce.*

NOUN. *Something offered in sacrifice.*

It is noted that *sacrifice*, the noun, is frequently mispronounced by the clergy, who rhyme the third syllable with *hiss*, *miss*, *this*, as: "SAK-ruh-fiss."

As this is an important word in the parlance of the pulpit, I should like to point out that no dictionary among the many referred to sanctions the short "i" sound of *fist* in the third syllable.

In the first-choice pronunciation, the third syllable rhymes with *price*; in the second-choice pronunciation, the third syllable rhymes with *prize*.

Ministers among the readers of this book are requested to confirm this information by consulting any recognized late-edition American dictionary:

First choice: SAK-ruh-fice

Second choice: SAK-ruh-fize

SACRILEGIOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Desecrating that which is sacred.*

It will be a distinct surprise to many readers (and especially to most clergymen) that the popular pronunciation "sak-ree-LIDGE-uss," in which the last three syllables have the exact sound of the word *religious*, is not best usage, although it is listed as second choice by a few authorities.

Contrary to common belief, *sacrilegious* does not derive from *religious*. Note the difference in spelling.

Sacrilegious is from the Latin *sacrilegus*, meaning "one who steals or picks up sacred things." *Religious* is from the Latin *religio*, meaning "taboo; restraint."

In *sacrilegious*, it is better to rhyme the third syllable with *fee* and *see* than with *ridge*. Accent the first and third syllables:

SAK-ruh-LEE'-jus

SAFARI, NOUN. *A caravan; hunting expedition.*

Safari is said to be from the Arabic. Dictionary opinion is divided as to how the word should be pronounced. A summing up of nine listings establishes this order:

First choice: suh-FAH-ree

Second choice: SUFF-uh-ree

SALARY, NOUN. *Compensation for services rendered.*

Not "SAL-ree."

The word must have three syllables:

SAL-er-ee

SALMON, NOUN. *A highly valued game fish.*

Not "SAL-mun" or "SAH-mun." The "l" is silent. The first syllable is exactly like the name *Sam*:

SAM-un

SALON, NOUN. *An elaborate drawing room; a place where works of art are exhibited.*

The universal American pronunciation "suh-LAHN" is to be found in few accepted dictionaries.

If you will check the pronunciation carefully in your dictionary, you will find that the "n" is given the French nasal sound, as in *bon, ton, mon*: sa-LAW(N).

Nevertheless, the French pronunciation occurs so seldom in American usage that I shall not recommend it. Better say:

suh-LAHN

Note: Salon and saloon have exactly the same meaning. Saloon is simply the English spelling of the French salon.

Nothing in the etymology of the word *saloon* even hints of the bar or of liquor, although in the United States, the word

has always been so associated. *Beauty saloon* is as correct in every way as *beauty salon*.

The *saloon* of a ship is not the bar but a large drawing room for first-class passengers. In England, the railroad parlor car is the *saloon car*. The British likewise prefer *saloon car* to designate the type of automobile known to us as the *sedan*.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SANTA CLAUS?

Do not say "SAN-dee klawss."

Santa Claus (the correct name is *Saint Nicholas*) was a very real person. In the fourth century, he was Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor. Today, in Greece, Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of sailors, merchants, and children.

Correct pronunciation:

SAN-tuh klawz

Note: The name *Kriss Kringle* is sometimes erroneously used to designate Santa Claus. *Kriss Kringle* is a corruption of the German *Christkindel*, "the Christ child."

No one knows the exact date of the birth of Christ. Until some time in the fourth century, Christmas (Christ's Mass) was variously celebrated on January 6, February 2, March 25, April 19, May 20, and November 17. In 1644, the English Parliament passed an act forbidding the observance of Christmas. Later, Charles II revived the Feast, as Christmas then was called.

Outside of England and the Teutonic countries, Christmas gifts are unknown in the Old World. In the Latin countries, including France, gifts (*étrennes*) are exchanged on New Year's Day.

In England, usually on the first weekday after Christmas, "Boxing Day," is observed. Packages, small gifts, and gratuities are given to postmen, errand boys, tradesmen, porters, charwomen, etc.

SARSAPARILLA, NOUN. *A South American plant, the roots of which are used as a flavoring.*

Do not say "SASS-puh-RELL'-uh."

It is doubtful whether the average person has ever heard

this word pronounced correctly in his lifetime. No authority sanctions or lists "SASS-puh-RELL'-uh."

Sarsaparilla is the Anglicized form of the Spanish *zarzaparrilla*. Correctly pronounced, the English word has five syllables. Note that the first syllable is not *sass-* and that *-rilla* does not rhyme with *Ella*:

SAHR-suh-puh-RILL'-uh

SCHEDULE, NOUN. *A plan or outline of events.*

For centuries, the writers of dictionaries have disagreed as to the pronunciation of *schedule*. Through the years, they have given us many variations, but the common American pronunciations "SKEDGE-ull" and "SKEDGE-you-ull" are not sanctioned by any dictionary:

In best usage, the first syllable does not rhyme with *sled*. Better say:

SKEH-jool

Note: In England the word is "SHED-yool," a pronunciation that has never been authorized for United States use.

SCION, NOUN. *A descendant; a detached portion of a plant.*

This word is familiar enough in print, but few speakers care to risk saying it. We should not say "SKY-un." The "c" is silent.

The first syllable of *scion* is like the word *sigh*. The second syllable rhymes with *sun*:

SY-un

Note: It is said that there are but six words in the English language ending in *-cion*: *cion* (another spelling of *scion* preferred by horticulturists), *coercion*, *epinicion*, *internecion*, *scion*, and *suspicion*. Does any reader know of others?

SECRETARY, NOUN. *A confidential clerk; a stenographer.*

A decade or two ago, American schoolma'ams decided that the British pronunciations "dictionree," "militree," "ordinree," "secretree," and "stationree" were infinitely more "cultivated" than the traditional American way of pronouncing these *-ary* words. Whereupon, the United States began to

break out with an Oxford rash that, for a while, threatened to reach epidemic proportions.

Today, happily, "Oxforditis" is on the wane, for, to the average American, the British accent, when voiced by native Americans—especially those of the screen and radio—is as jarringly out of place as high tea in a five-and-ten or a game of cricket in Yankee Stadium.

The British are an admirable, gallant, and courageous people, but their manner of speech is not accepted as correct for us who live on this side of the Atlantic.

In the standard, cultured American speech, the third, or -*ar*-, syllable of *secretary* and similar words receives a secondary accent and rhymes with *fair*, *hair*, *pair*:

SEK'ruh-TAIR-ee

(See DICTIONARY, page 100.)

SECRETIVE, ADJECTIVE. *Extremely reticent; disposed to secrete.*

This is one of the most frequently mispronounced words in the American vocabulary.

Do not say "SEE-kruh-tiv."

Accepted authorities do not sanction the first-syllable accent. The correct pronunciation will be easier to remember if we keep in mind that *secretive* is a companion word of *secrete* and *secretion*, both of which are accented on the second, or -*cre*-, syllable:

see-KREE-tiv

SELAH

This Hebrew word occurs often in the Psalms, but no one knows its exact meaning. It apparently indicates "a pause." The pronunciation is:

SEE-luh

SEÑOR. *Spanish title of respect.*

In *señor*, "Mr.," *señora*, "Mrs.," and *señorita*, "Miss," the first syllable should rhyme with *cain*, *main*, *train*, not with *dean*, *seen*:

señor: sain-YORE

señora: sain-YOE-rah

señorita: SAIN-yoe-REE'-tah

Note: The corresponding Italian forms of address are *signor*, "Mr.," *signora*, "Mrs.," and *signorina*, "Miss." They are pronounced:

signor: seen-YORE

signora: seen-YOE-rah

signorina: SEEN-yoe-REE'-nah

The French *seigneur*, "lord," "gentleman," has two pronunciations:

Anglicized: seen-YER

French: sain-YER

The form *signor*, "lord," "gentleman," a title used in the Catholic Church, is pronounced:

SEEN-yer

All these titles have their origin in the Latin *senior*, "the elder."

(See TILDE, page 243.)

SESAME, NOUN. *An East Indian plant.*

Not "SEE-saim."

In the *Arabian Nights* tale of "Ali Baba (AH-lee BAH-bah) and the Forty Thieves," *Open, sesame!* was the magic command that caused the door of the robbers' cave to swing open.

In the East, the seeds of the sesame plant are valued as food and for the oil which they contain.

The word has three syllables:

SESS-uh-mee

SHERBET, NOUN. *Either a fruit-juice drink or a water ice.*

Question: Which is the correct word, *sherbet* or *sherbert*? I have seen both forms in menus and recipes.

Answer: There is no such word as *sherbert*. Spell and pronounce the word without the second "r":

SHER-bet

SILHOUETTE, NOUN. *A profile picture in one solid color; an outline.*

Not "SILL-yoo-ett."

Silhouette is from the name *Étienne de Silhouette*, Controller General of France in the eighteenth century.

During his regime (ray-ZHEEM), he imposed such heavy taxes on the upper classes, stripping them of much of their wealth, that *silhouette* became a general term for "a figure reduced to its simplest form." Hence, a *silhouette*, as we use the word, is "a picture reduced to its simplest form."

The second syllable is "oo," not "you." Accent the third syllable:

sill-oo-ETT

SIMULTANEOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Occurring at the same time.*

First choice: SY-mull-TAY'-nee-us

Second choice: SIM-ull-TAY'-nee-us

SINK, NOUN. *A kitchen basin with a drain and water supply.*

It is noted that many persons, in the South especially, change the "s" of *sink*, the noun, to "z" and speak of the "kitchen zink."

The explanation of this fault in pronunciation is not hard to find. It lies in the fact that the first kitchen sinks and early bathtubs were made of metal coated with zinc (galvanized iron). Since *zinc* and the *sink* were introduced at about the same time, it was natural to confuse the words.

Zinc for *sink* is dialectal and has no dictionary support.

Correct pronunciation:

singk

SIREN, NOUN. *An enticing, dangerous woman; a warning device.*

Do not say "sy-REEN."

In Greek mythology, the sirens were daughters of the sea god Phorcys. By their "sweet singing," they lured mariners to destruction on the rocks of their island home, which is said to have been near the rock of Scylla (SILL-uh). (See Homer's *Odyssey*.)

Odysseus, on one of his heroic voyages, had been warned of the fatal lure of the sirens. He thwarted them by stopping his sailors' ears with wax and lashing himself to the mast of his ship.

The Germans have a similar legend in "The Lorelei."

It is a curious transition from the enticing song of Homer's

sea nymphs (nimfs) to the piercing wail of today's mechanical sirens that serve the opposite purpose of *warning* us of danger.

The word is accented on the first syllable, which is like the word *sign*. The vowel sound in the second syllable is like the obscure "e" in *silent*:

SY-r'n

SIRUP, NOUN. *A thick, sweet liquid.*

A strange quirk in the average vocabulary transposes the "i" and "u" sounds in *sirup* and produces the common pronunciation "SUR-ip."

The spelling of the first syllable of *sirup*, because it is identical with the word *sir*, causes the average speaker to pronounce it "sur," to rhyme with *cur*, *fur*.

Indeed, a recent article about the pronunciation of *sirup* caused a storm of protest to explode about my bloody but still unbowed head.

Scores of readers suggested that I buy a dictionary. "You will see," they declared, "that the pronunciation is spelled phonetically as 'SIR-up.'"

That is true; but in dictionaries that use the Webster diacritical marks, the "i" of *sirup* has over it a symbol (the breve) that is like a small crescent moon lying on its side (˘). This mark gives to the "i" the short sound, as in the first syllable of *irrigate*, *irritate* (pronounced: EAR-uh-gait, EAR-uh-tait), and makes the *sir-* of *sirup* rhyme with *fear*, *hear*, *near*.

To prove that this is true, turn to your dictionary and look up the pronunciation of the title *sir*. You will find it to be "sûr," to rhyme with *fur*. Thus it is seen that the dictionaries' *sir-* is not intended to have the sound of "sûr."

It must be noted, however, that the newer dictionaries now give sanction to the "sûr" sound as an alternative. Thus *sirup* may be pronounced:

SEAR-up or SUR-up

Note: While the spelling *syrup* has dictionary support, in modern usage it has been generally superseded by *sirup*. (See STIRRUP, page 235.)

SKI, VERB. *To coast on skis.*

The Norwegian and Swedish pronunciation is "shee," and is widely heard in England.

In the United States, the form in best usage is:

skee

SLOUGH

Slough has three pronunciations, depending on how the word is used.

Slough, noun, meaning "a mudhole," rhymes with *thou*:
slou

Slough, noun, meaning "a marsh or swamp," rhymes with *woo*:

sloo

Slough, verb, meaning "to shed or cast off," rhymes with *cuff*:

sluff

SOLDER, NOUN. *A metallic alloy used to join together metallic surfaces.*

A reader insists that *solder*, because of its spelling, should rhyme with *colder*, *bolder*, *holder*. But we have already learned that analogy counts for little in the pronunciation of any English word.

In *solder*, the silent "l" is influenced by the former spellings *soder* and *souder*. But please note that the vowel sound is not "aw," as "SAW-der."

The correct vowel sound is "ah." Say:

SAH-der

SOLON

Question: Why is a legislator sometimes called a *Solon*, and how is the word pronounced?

Answer: The word derives from the name of *Solon*, of the family of Codrus, a wise Athenian lawmaker of the sixth century.

Do not say "suh-LAWN." Accent the first syllable, which rhymes with *toe*:

SOE-lahn

(See SALON, page 226.)

SOPHOMORE, NOUN. *A student in the second year of a four-year course.*

Before this was written, twenty persons were asked to say this word. All mispronounced it "SAHF-more." This is a word of three syllables. No dictionary shows it otherwise.

The word has a curious origin. It is from the Greek *sophos*, "wise," and *moros*, "fool"! Research fails to reveal the whys and wherefores of this paradox. Can it be that the crusty old Hellenic pedagogue who gave us this word (the Greeks, bless 'em, seem to have a word for everything, don't they?) created it as an expression of his low esteem for second-year classmen: wise fools?

Sophomores, however, may take heart, for the "wise-fool" meaning has been lost somewhere in times long past. No breath of odium whatever attaches to the name today, especially at one's Alma Mater (AL-muh MAY-ter).

The first trace of the word in English appears in *The Armoury*, written in 1668 by Holme, in which he spoke of second-year students as "Sophy Moores."

Be sure to pronounce the "o" in the second syllable.

SAHF-oh-more

SOUSA, JOHN PHILIP. *American March King.*

Not "SOO-zuh." The second "s" should have the "s" sound, not the sound of "z":

SOO-suh

Note: I should like to quash a legend about the origin of the name *John Philip Sousa*.

The story goes thus: The bandsman was born in Greece. He was christened John Philipso. When he entered the United States as an immigrant, he caused his baggage to be lettered "John Philipso, U. S. A." Desiring an American-sounding name, he coined *Sousa* from the -so of Philipso and the initials U. S. A.

There is not a word of truth in the story. Sousa was as genuinely American as is his great music. He was born November 6, 1854, at Washington, D. C. His grandparents, however, were refugees from Portugal. The name *Sousa* is a common one in Portugal.

SOVIET, NOUN. *A governing body in the U.S.S.R.*

Soviet is from *sovet*, the Russian word for "council." The preferred pronunciation places the accent on the third syllable, thus:

soe-vee-ETT

SPOKANE. *A city of eastern Washington.*

The common mispronunciation "spo-KAIN" is a pardonable error. It is natural that the spelling of the second syllable would suggest "cain," to rhyme with *main*, *pain*.

Spokane, the bustling "metropolis of the Inland Empire," is a city of magnificent vistas. The climate is temperate, healthful, and bracing. The city was settled in 1874 by John N. Glover.

The name is from the Indian *Spokan*, "children of the Sun," the name of a tribe of Salishan stock.

The proper rhyme of the last syllable of *Spokane* is with *man*, *pan*:

spoe-KAN

STATUS, NOUN. *State or condition of a person or thing.*

Status is the Latin word from which we get the word *state*.

In the Anglicized pronunciation, the "a" of *status* must have the long "ay" sound, as in *state*:

Correct pronunciation:

STAY-tuss

Note: Likewise, the "ay" sound is best usage in *data* (DAY-tuh), *strata* (STRAY-tuh), *verbatim* (ver-BAY-tim), and *gratis* (GRAY-tiss).

STING RAY. *A ray with a whiplike tail.*

"Sting-er-EE" is a commonly heard corruption.

The name should be pronounced exactly as it is spelled:

sting RAY

STIRRUP, NOUN. *The part of a saddle that supports the foot.*

There are three surprises in the pronunciation of *stirrup*:

(1) No dictionary lists the commonly heard "sturp." The word must have two distinct syllables.

(2) The pronunciation "STER-up," to rhyme with "blur up," is found in only five of eight dictionaries consulted, and is listed as second choice.

(3) The preferred pronunciation of most authorities gives to the first syllable of *stirrup* the short "i" sound, as in *miracle*, *spirit*, *irrigate* (MEAR-uh-k'l, SPEAR-it, EAR-uh-gait), not the "u" sound as heard in *sir*, *stir*, *whir* ("sur," "stur," "whur").

Nevertheless, the "STEAR-up" pronunciation is rarely heard in American speech, although it prevails in British usage.

First choice: STUR-up

Second choice: STEAR-up

Note: In checking the pronunciation of *stirrup* in your dictionary, if you will make sure that you understand the diacritical mark that is shown above the vowel "i," (˘), you will see that these findings are accurate.

(See SIRUP, page 232.)

STOMACH, NOUN. *An important organ of the digestive system.*

Do not say "STUM-mik."

The "a" of the second syllable is obscured, as in *sofa*:

STUM-uk

STRATA, NOUN. *Layers of rock or earth.*

The long "a" (ay) in the first syllable now has the support of good usage, although the pronunciation STRAT-uh (the first syllable rhyming with *rat*) is not incorrect; it is sanctioned as second choice:

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: STRAY-tuh

Second choice: STRAT-uh

Note: We should keep in mind that *strata* is the plural of *stratum*. Likewise, *data* is the plural of *datum* (DAY-tum) and *phenomena* is the plural of *phenomenon*.

(See INSIGNIA, page 149.)

STRATEGIC, ADJECTIVE. *Of or pertaining to strategy.*

It is a common error to say "struh-JET-ik."

Strategic should be accented on the second syllable, which is "tee" and not "jet":

struh-TEE-jik

STRENUOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Vigorous; very active.*

Two mispronunciations are frequently heard: "STREN-er-uss" and "STRAIN-yuss"; neither is in accordance with the dictionaries.

I once heard it said that the word *strenuous* was coined by President Theodore Roosevelt. It is true that he gave to the word a vogue it might otherwise not have enjoyed ("I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the *strenuous life*."—1899). But the word was ancient before T. R. was born. We have it almost unchanged from the Latin *strenuus*, "strong," "harsh," "rough."

The first syllable rhymes with *men*, not *main*. The second syllable is identical with the word *you*. Accent the first syllable:

STREN-yoo-uss

STREPTOCOCCI, NOUN, PLURAL. *Any coccus occurring in chains.*

Do not say "STREP-tuh-KAHK'-eye."

Many physicians and nearly all laymen mispronounce this word.

Note that the last "c" has the sound of "s," and the "i" is long, as in *by*, *my*:

STREP-toe-KAHK'-sy

Note: In the singular form, *streptococcus*, the last "c" has the sound of "k":

STREP-toe-KAH'-kuss

But in the adjective, *streptococcic*, the first "c" of *-cic* again has the sound of "s":

STREP-toe-KAHK'-sik

STUKA, GERMAN. *A dive bomber.*

Stuka is a word coined from the first and second syllables of *Sturzkampfflugzeug*, meaning "a fighting plane that dives from a high altitude at great speed."

Accent the first syllable:

SHTOŌ-kah

SUBTLE, ADJECTIVE. *Insidious; quietly active; artful.*

It is not generally known that, for all practical purposes, *subtle* and *subtile* are interchangeable. *Subtle*, however, is regarded by most authorities as the better and more modern choice.

How to use the word: "The flower has a delicate, subtle fragrance."

The "b" in *subtle* should not be pronounced. On the other hand, the "b" in *subtile* should be heard:

subtle: SUT-t'l

subtile: SUB-till

SUCCINCT, ADJECTIVE. *Short; condensed; brief; laconic.*

Not "suh-SINKT."

As in *flaccid* (page 123), the first "c" has the sound of "k."
Say:

suk-SINKT

SUITE or SUIT?

Question: Are *suite* and *suit* interchangeable? Are they pronounced in the same way? Why do we have two words so nearly alike?

Answer: The French *suite* and the Anglicized *suit* are interchangeable to a limited degree. *Suite*, however, is preferred for "a retinue," "a number of things constituting a set or sequence," as "a *suite* of rooms" or "a musical *suite*." The furniture industry prefers "a *suit* of furniture," and *suit* is the better choice for playing-card sequences, clothes, armor, the act of suing.

The pronunciation "soot" for *suit* is no longer held as incorrect. Indeed, the newer dictionaries list "soot" as first choice.

suite: sweet

suit: soot or syoot

SULFANILAMIDE, NOUN. *A powerful drug of recent discovery.*

Accent the third syllable. The last syllable rhymes with *hide*, *tide*:

SUL-fan-ILL'-uh-mide

SUPERFLUOUS, ADJECTIVE. *More than is necessary.*

Not "SOO-per-FLOO'-uss."

The "u" in the first syllable has the long sound (yoo).
Accent the second syllable:

syoo-PER-floo-uss

SUPPLE, ADJECTIVE. *Yielding; pliant; elastic.*

Many speakers give to this word the erroneous "SOO-p'l" of the little-girl-next-door, who, when she encountered the word in my dictionary, asked: "*S-u-p-p-l-e*—what does that mean?"

I explained: "It means . . . well, rather loose in the joints, as you are."

"Yes," she said, "and what makes me 'SOO-p'l' is eating so much *soup*!"

Notwithstanding, the first syllable of *supple* must rhyme with *cup*, *pup*, *sup*:

SUP-p'l

SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

There is a big surprise in store for the average reader when he is reminded that the first syllable of *surprise* is not *sup*-, as in *suppose*, but *sur*-, as in *surface*, *surgeon*.

No dictionary sanctions the dropping of the "r" from the first syllable. Yet, unless you yourself are above the average in the accuracy of your speech, you will habitually use one of the three common mispronunciations: "sup-PRIZE," "soo-PRIZE," "sip-PRIZE."

But don't feel bad about it, for you have much illustrious company. *Surprise* is eighth in my list of the ten words most frequently mispronounced. Be sure to say:

ser-PRIZE

We have a wondrous way with words

(As I've remarked before);

We rob some words of letters, and

To others we add more

Than they should have. I think it strange

That out of place we jar

The bad boy of the alphabet,

The eighteenth letter, "r."

Please say this word aloud: *forget*.

Unless I miss my guess,

"Fuh-get" is how the word came out;

Now honor bright, confess.

Next, try this word: *surprise*. You see?

"r" nowhere was about.

"Sup-prise" is no surprise to me;

Why leave the letter out?

To equalize our misplaced "r's"

Let's play at put-and-take:

Remove the "r" from "Warshington"

(For that's a grave mistake);

From "idear" amputate it, too;

Restore it to *surprise*

And to *forget*. Hurrah! At last

We seem to harmonize!

SWASTIKA, NOUN. *A crosslike symbol or ornament.*

Do not say "swawss-TEE-kuh."

The swastika is a device of great antiquity. It did not, as is popularly believed, originate with the Indian tribes of North and South America, although the swastika appears frequently in American Indian decorative design. It was used in the Bronze Age, and it is found in the arts of ancient Persia, Egypt, Greece, India, Japan, and China. One authority calls the swastika one of the most ancient and widespread of all ornamental forms appearing in both hemispheres.

The swastika is variously interpreted as "a symbol of the sun god," "a sacred good luck charm," "a religious token," or "a sign of benediction."

The word *swastika* is accented on the first, or *swas*-, syllable, the "a" of which is either flat, as in *bad*, or broad, as in *father*. The "i" in the second syllable is short, as in *tick*; do not give it the long "e" sound, as in *unique*, *machine*.

First choice: SWASS-ti-kuh

Second choice: SWAHSS-ti-kuh

Note: In Germany, the swastika is known as *Hakenkreuz*, a literal translation of which is "hooked cross." The *Hakenkreuz* is used in Germany as the emblem of the National Socialist Party.

The “a” in the first syllable has the “ah” sound; *-kreuz* has the “oi” sound of *toil, coil*; it rhymes with *quoits*:

HAH-ken-kroits

SYZYGY

Question: How do you like *syzygy* as the world’s ugliest word?

Answer: *Syzygy*, truly a monstrosity, is the only word I know of in which three “y’s” appear as the only vowels. The word is pronounced:

SIZZ-i-jee

TABLE D’HÔTE, FRENCH. *A meal served at a fixed price.*

Not “TAY-b’l dee HOE-tee.”

In the first syllable of *table*, use the flat “a,” as in *cab*; *d’hôte* rhymes with *note*:

TAB-luh DOTE

TARPAULIN, NOUN. *Canvas covered with tar, or impregnated with waterproof composition.*

No dictionary sanctions or lists “tahr-POLE-yun.”

This mispronunciation doubtless originated in an attempt to give the word a French twist, but it isn’t certain that the word is of French origin. It is probably from *tar* plus *pall*, “a covering.” That is beside the point, however, for the French would never say “tahr-POLE-yun” in any event. Neither should we.

The second syllable rhymes with *law*, the third syllable with *pin*:

tahr-PAW-lin

TECHNIQUE, NOUN. *Expert method in execution.*

Musicians and painters especially are prone to mispronounce this word: “TEK-nik.”

Technique has been taken over from the French unchanged in spelling, meaning, and pronunciation. We have no English word of its exact meaning.

Be sure to accent the second syllable, which rhymes with *week, seek*:

tek-NEEK

THAMES

Do not say "thaims," to rhyme with *claims*.

The name of the historic river on the banks of which London is situated rhymes with *hems*, *stems*. The "h" is silent:

TEMZ

THE. Definite article.**A. Indefinite article.**

The rules that govern the pronunciation of *the* and *a* are clearly defined, as most of us will remember from grammar-school days. However, many speakers err in the pronunciation of the articles.

A reader points out that, on the Columbia network, the announcers almost without exception erroneously say: "This is 'thee' Columbia Broadcasting System." On the other hand, N.B.C. announcers pronounce *the* correctly: "This is 'thuh' National Broadcasting Company."

I have observed that most professional broadcasters prefer "thee" altogether, as: "thee news of thee day," "thee man who . . .," etc. Also, the indefinite article *a* is frequently mispronounced "ay," to rhyme with *day*.

Here are the simple rules:

<i>the</i>	{ before a consonant—as: "the man":	thuh
	{ before a vowel—as: "the egg":	thee
<i>a</i>	{ before a consonant—as: "a man":	uh
	{ before a vowel adds "-n"—as: "an egg":	an

THEATER, NOUN. *A place where theatrical performances are enacted.*

Never be guilty of the ruralism "thee-AY-ter." At the opposite extreme, is the cream-puffish and entirely erroneous "THIT-ter."

Theater is from a Greek word meaning "a place for seeing." The original Greek theater, according to those who have made a study of the subject, was little more than a roughly marked dancing circle at the foot of a hillside upon which the audience gathered.

Elaborate and magnificent theaters, however, are not the

sole product of this generation. Pliny, a Roman author, tells of a theater of almost incredible splendor built by M. Aemilius Soaurs in 58 B.C. It is said to have seated audiences of more than eighty thousand! This, of course, was without benefit of double features, stage "presentations," bingo nights, free dishes, or Donald Duck.

The correct pronunciation places the accent on the first syllable. The "a" is obscured, as in *sofa*:

THEE-uh-ter

Note: The spelling *theater* is now preferred to *theatre*.
(See DRAMATIS PERSONAE, page 106, and PIT, page 409.)

TITIAN

Do not say "TIT-yun."

Titian (whose real name was Tiziano Vecellio, teets-YAH-noe vay-CHELL-yoe), one of the most famous artists of the Venetian school of painting, was ninety-nine years of age at his death in 1576. His paintings are treasured in many cathedrals and galleries throughout the world.

A remarkable characteristic of his work was the forceful use of color, especially a red-yellow of high saturation and medium brilliance. Today, the adjective *Titian* (note the capital "T") usually describes hair of a reddish or auburn color.

The first syllable rhymes with *fish*, *wish*:

TISH-un

TILDE

Question: What is the name of the little wavy mark over the Spanish "ñ," as in *Señor*, *Señora*, *Señorita*?

Answer: It is called *tilde*. It changes the sound of "n" to "ny," as in the word *cañon*: *canyon*. The correct pronunciation is:

Anglicized: TILL-de

Spanish: TEEL-day

(See SEÑOR, page 229.)

TOBACCO, NOUN. *A plant of the genus Nicotiana.*

Every time we utter the word *tobacco*, we should say to ourselves "oh, oh," as a reminder that the word is almost universally mispronounced, and that it properly contains two

“oh” sounds, one in the first syllable and one in the third syllable.

It is incorrect to say “tuh-BAK-uh.”

As in *calico*, *stucco*, and *portico*, the “o” should have the long sound.

Contrary to popular belief, tobacco was not introduced into Europe by Sir Walter Raleigh. The weed was brought to Europe in 1558 by a Spanish physician, Francisco Fernandes. Jean Nicot (nee-KOE), for whom the genus *nicotine* was named, brought the first tobacco to France in 1560. It was not until 1586, when Lane, first governor of Virginia, gave the materials and implements of tobacco smoking to Sir Walter, that the latter introduced the habit into the Court of England.

Correct pronunciation:

toe-BAK-oh

(See TOMORROW, page 245.)

TOMATO, NOUN. *A South American herb widely cultivated for its fruit.*

In the pronunciation of *tomato*, the country is divided into two camps: the first and larger group rhymes the word with *potato*, and the second stoutly defends the broad “a” sound (ah) in the second syllable, as: toe-MAH-toe.

The dictionaries, though, do not agree on how the “a” should be sounded. *Webster’s*, *Winston’s*, and *Macmillan’s* list toe-MAY-toe as first choice, and the English *Oxford* gives it as the only United States pronunciation. *Century* and *Funk and Wagnalls* list toe-MAH-toe as first choice.

Tomato and *potato* come from the Indian words *batata* and *tomatl*. Spanish conquistadores changed the words to *patata* and *tomate*, from which the English forms have evolved.

Since *potato* is never given the broad “a” sound, and since toe-MAY-toe is preferred by two thirds of the dictionaries consulted and is the pronunciation most frequently heard in the United States, this book recommends:

First choice: toe-MAY-toe

Second choice: toe-MAH-toe

Memory Verse

To those who still swear by "toe-MAH-toe,"
I offer this verse as a motto:
 "We *will* be consistent,
 We're therefore insistent
A spud should be dubbed a 'poe-TAH-toe.' "

TOMORROW, NOUN. *The day after today.*

Poets have said that *tomorrow* is one of the most beautiful sounding words in English, but not as it is usually mispronounced: "tuh-MAH-ruh."

In America, there is a curious speech perversion for which I have never found a satisfactory explanation:

Most of us prefer the unlovely "uh" sound in *arrow*, *borrow*, *minnow*, *pillow*, *potato*, *Toledo*, *torpedo*, *widow*, *window*, *yellow*, etc., as: "AR-ruh," "BAHR-ruh," "MIN-nuh," "PIL-luh," "puh-TAY-tuh," "Tuh-LEE-duh," "tawr-PEE-duh," "WID-uh," "WIN-duh," "YELL-luh," but we scrupulously voice the correct long "o" sound in scores of other such words as *banjo*, *buffalo*, *bungalow*, *calico*, *cameo*, *cargo*, *ditto*, *domino*, *flamingo*, *hello*, *indigo*, *jello*, *motto*, *presto*.

If we say *hello* and *jello* correctly, why should we pronounce *mellow* and *fellow* as "MELL-luh" and "FELL-luh"? Since we use the correct "o" sound in *Plato*, why do we corrupt the "o" to "uh" in *potato* and *tomato*?

We never mispronounce *domino*; why, then, "al-BY-nuh" and "MIN-nuh" for *albino* and *minnow*?

If any reader can send me a workable theory to explain this inconsistent quirk, I should be indebted to him.

The corruption of "o" to "uh" in all the foregoing words, and hundreds more ending in "-o" and "-ow," will be shunned by those who are mindful of their speech.

The first syllable of *tomorrow* rhymes with *coo*, *woo*; the third syllable rhymes with *toe*:

too-MAH-roe

TOO MUCHNESS

Let us discuss another curious phenomenon in the American vocabulary:

It is noted that speakers often add extra and unwarranted

syllables to many words that are in everyday use. We hear "DROWN-ded" for *drowned*, "ATH-uh-LET'-ik" for *athletic*, "pre-VEN-tuh-tiv" for *preventive*, "uh-TAK-ted" for *attacked*, "UM-ber-EL'-luh" for *umbrella*, "mis-CHEE-vee-uss" for *mischievous*, and (grossest error of all) "bahr-BAIR-ee-uss" for *barbarous*.

Since the common tendency is to telescope most multisyllabic words, as "JEN-r'l" for *general*, "muh-TEAR-ul" for *material*, "GUV-ment" for *government*; our verbal extravagance in the case of *athletic*, *attacked*, *barbarous*, etc., is difficult to account for, and I shall do no more than call attention to it here.

Correct pronunciations:

drowned: drownd
athletic: ath-LET-ik
preventive: pree-VEN-tiv
attacked: uh-TAKT
umbrella: um-BREL-luh
mischievous: MISS-chi-vuss
barbarous: BAHHR-buh-russ

TOSCANINI

Question: Please pronounce the name of the conductor.

Answer: Do not say "TAHSS-kuh-NINNY." *Ninny*, in connection with the name of the great musician, is anything but seemly, and it is entirely incorrect.

The suffix *-ini* is a common ending to Italian surnames. It means "son of," "of the tribe or family of." It is familiar in such names as *Paganini* (pah-gah-NEE-nee), *Puccini* (poot-CHEE-nee), *Mussolini* (MOO-soe-LEE-nee).

The first syllable of *Toscanini* is like the word *toast* without the "t." The second syllable has the "ah" sound; *-ini* has the exact sound of *-eeny* in the counting-out game "Eeny, meeny, miney, mo":

TOESS-kah-NEE'-nee

TOURNIQUET, NOUN. *A tight bandage for the purpose of arresting bleeding.*

Not "TERN-uh-kay."

Rhyme the first syllable with *poor*, the third syllable with *bet*:

TOÖR-ni-ket

TOWARD, PREPOSITION. *In the direction of.*

The commonly heard "too-WAHRD" is not good usage. Lexicographer John Walker described it as obsolescent in 1791. In recent years, however, "too-WAHRD" has become common in Britain.

The form *towards* is not recommended, except when the "s" is desired for euphony.

Best American usage accents the first syllable, which is identical with the word *toe*. Second choice reduces the word to one syllable, a perfect rhyme for *ford*:

First choice: TOE-erd

Second choice: tord

THE FOUR TREES

Please read this sentence aloud: "There's a mystery at the factory in the history of the battery." Even if you are the average, or better than average, speaker, you will have just spoken of no fewer than four trees: "MISS-tree," "FAK-tree," "HIS-tree," and "BAT-tree."

The telescoping of these words is almost universal, but reference to any accepted dictionary will show that each word, when properly pronounced, must have three syllables.

The second syllable of *mystery* and *battery* is *-ter-*, to rhyme with *her*. The second syllable of *factory* and *history* is identical with the word *toe*:

Correct pronunciations:

mystery: MISS-ter-ee

factory: FAK-toe-ree

history: HISS-toe-ree

battery: BAT-ter-ee

TREMENDOUS, ADJECTIVE. *Terrifying; awe-inspiring.*

Not only is the word *tremendous* frequently mispronounced, as "truh-MEN-juss," but the word is almost universally misused as to meaning as well.

Does it mean "big," "huge," "gigantic"? Not at all. *Tremendous*, from the Latin *tremere*, "to tremble," means literally "that which fills one with such dread as to cause trembling."

Use of the word to designate great size—as "a tremendous mountain"—or large degree—as "a tremendous success"—is a colloquialism that should be avoided in careful speech or writing.

The "d" of *tremendous*, *immediate*, and *pendulum* must never be given the sound of "j," as "truh-MEN-jus," "im-MEE-jit," "PEN-joo-lum." The "d" sound only is sanctioned:

tremendous: tree-MEN-duss

pendulum: PEN-dyoo-lum

immediate: im-MEE-dee-it

U

Now the question naturally arises: Should I use the long "ū" (yoo) sound in all words, without exception, in which the dictionaries show the long "ū"?

It is not possible or even advisable to lay down an iron-clad rule for the long "ū" sound, for the dictionary listing of the long "ū" does not make its use mandatory, nor does the "ū" listing indicate that the "yoo" sound is invariably the better usage. Indeed, if the reader will refer to paragraphs 240, 241, and 242, page lii, in the forepart (pronunciation section) of *Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition*, he will find that even that august tome does not regard the "ōō" sound in the long "ū" words as one of the seven deadly sins.

However, we can say with certainty that it violates good usage and is contrary to dictionary recommendation to use the "yoo" sound in such words as *blue*, *brew*, *chew*, *crew*, *drew*, *flew*, *fluent*, *fruit*, *glue*, *grew*, *include*, *judicious*, *June*, *noon*, *prune*, *rude*, *rule*, *screw*, *shrew*, *soon*, *threw*, *through*, *true*, *truant*. The long "ū" sound in these and similar words is a stoplight of unusual magnitude.

There are many familiar words in which the dictionaries show long "ū" but which are not invariably given the long

"ū" (yoo) sound. No one can make an accurate estimate of the percentage of public speakers who do and who do not use the long "ū" (yoo) sound in the words. But, after checking the words in the speech of several thousand radio speakers, lay and professional, a reasonable cross-section of the nation as a whole, I believe this conclusion to be sound enough for our purpose:

1. In some of the words, the "yoo" sound prevails.
 2. In some of the words, the "yoo" and "ōō" sounds are heard with about equal frequency.
 3. In some of the words, the "ōō" sound prevails.
- Let us list them in that order.

1. The "yoo" sound prevails in: *attitude, avenue, dew, due, duke, duty, endure, gratitude, institute, knew, new, news, newspaper, nude, numerical, numerous, opportunity, solitude, tube, tune.*

2. "Yoo" and "ōō" are about equally divided in *enthusiasm, nuisance, presume, resume, stew, student, studio, studious, tumor.*

3. The "ōō" (sometimes "ōō") sound prevails in *absolute, allude, allusion, assume, dude, duration, during, garrulous, illusion, illuminate, lute, lieutenant, prelude, resolution, revolution, salute, suit, super, superintend, superintendent, supreme.*

If this appraisal approaches the true status of the long "ū" words, it would seem to indicate rather strongly that the American finds the "yoo" sound pleasant to say after "d, n, t," is unenthusiastic about "yoo" after "th, z, st," and generally avoids "yoo" after "l, r, s."

That the newer dictionaries hold the same view will be seen by referring to Kenyon and Knott's *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* (G. and C. Merriam Co.), *The American College Dictionary* (Random House), and *WORDS: The New Dictionary* (Grosset and Dunlap).

The American College Dictionary and Grosset and Dunlap's *WORDS: The New Dictionary* list "ōō" and not "yoo" in such words as *enthuse, presume, assume, suicide, suit, superficial, super, supra, lieutenant, lunatic, luminous, lukewarm, lupine, lute, revolution, resume, resolution, etc.*

It must be emphasized, however, that the "yoo" sound in the permissible words becomes a spotlight if it is overdone to such a degree as to suggest "see-OOT" for *suit*, "a-see-YOOM" for *assume*, "lee-OOT" for *lute*, "rez-oh-lee-OO-shun" for *resolution*, etc. Also, the wise speaker will avoid the palatization often heard in British speech: "Chewsdlay" for *Tuesday*, "jooty" for *duty*, "shoot" for *suit*, etc.

Above all, never allow yourself to be tempted to adopt a pronouncing idiocy that is frequently heard on the air—of sounding "yoo" in such words as *noon*, *too*, *tomorrow*, *two*, *afternoon*.

I have actually heard this from Hollywood: "Be sure tyoo tyoon in again tyoomorrow ahfternyoon at tyoo o'clock."

An announcer stated that his sponsor's after-shave lotion has a "cyooling" effect on the skin. And a woman announcer urged us all to "ahsk for Blank's chicken syoop with nyoodles"!

Such ridiculous strivings for correct speech result from overemphasis by "diction" teachers of the "yoo" sound in the so-called long "ū" words. They drill their students endlessly on such practice sentences as "The lugubrious lunatic committed suicide (the lyoo-GYOO-bree-uss LYOON-uh-tik committed SYOO-i-side)," implanting in the minds of their students the entirely erroneous idea that "ōō" is a naughty sound that shouldn't be heard in any word. The avoidance of "ōō," then, becomes an obsession which results in "nyoon" for *noon*, "cyool" for *cool*, "syoop" for *soup*, etc.

Another source of confusion about the "yoo" sound is Funk and Wagnalls' *New Standard Dictionary*, which shows pronunciations first in the obsolete Revised Scientific Alphabet of notation, and second in an adaptation of the Webster symbols.

Say that a speaker has made a resolve to polish up his accents by regularly consulting the dictionary . . . the dictionary in this case being the F. and W. *New Standard*.

Now let us see what happens. Say that he is undecided

about the vowel sound in the word *noon*. Turning to his Funk and Wagnalls' *New Standard*, he finds this listing:

noon, 1 nūn; 2 nōon

His eye does not get beyond the pronunciation "nūn". Knowing that the Webster symbol "ū" means the "yoo" sound, he quite naturally mistakes the F. and W. "nūn" for "nyoon." Likewise F. and W.'s "dū" for *do*, "tū" for *to*, *too*, *two*, "sūn" for *soon*, and "blū" for *blue* are misread as "dyoo, tyoo, syoon, blyoo."

Having failed to consult the F. and W. example words which are shown on each page of the vocabulary, our speaker does not understand that in the F. and W. notations, "ū" stands for "ōō" as in *boot*, and that the "yoo" sound is indicated by the symbol "iū," as in F. and W.'s "niū" for *new*, "piū" for *pew*, and "fiū" for *few*.

This confusion of the F. and W. with the Webster symbols leads the unfortunate speaker to the erroneous conclusion that "Be sure tyoo tyoon in again tyoomorrow afternyoon at tyoo o'clock" is the acme of perfection.

The careful speaker will make the "y" of the "yoo" sound as brief as possible in all the long "ū" words so that there will be no suggestion of affectation or overpreciseness to turn on the little red light.

In any type of public speaking, the most admirable of the virtues is RESTRAINT. Or, as Shakespeare put it: *You must require and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.*

U-BOAT

Question: Why is the German submarine often spoken of as *U-boat*?

Answer: *U-boat* is a shortened form of the German word for *submarine*: *Unterseeboot* (literally "undersea boat"). It is pronounced:

ŪON-ter-ZAY'-bote

ULTIMATUM, NOUN. *Final proposition, offer, or terms.*

One of the best-known radio commentators always refers to Germany's "ul-tuh-MAT-um," rhyming the third syllable with *bat, cat*.

I fail to find dictionary support for such a pronunciation. In the third syllable, the "a" must have the "ay" sound of *bay, day, say*:

UL-ti-MAY'-tum

Note: The plural of *ultimatum* is either *ultimatums* or *ultimata*. The first is the better American choice.

The "ay" sound is also best usage in *apparatus* (AP-uh-RAY'-tuss), *candelabra* (KAN-duh-LAY'-bruh), *data* (DAY-tuh), *gratis* (GRAY-tiss), *strata* (STRAY-tuh), *tenacious* (ten-AY-shuss), *verbatim* (ver-BAY-tim), *vivacious* (vy-VAY-shuss), and *stratosphere* (STRAY-toe-sfear).

UMBRELLA, NOUN. *A protection from the sun.*

Not "um-buh-RELL-uh."

This word is so great a curiosity as to be almost a museum piece. Ask anyone what an *umbrella* is. Almost invariably the answer will be something like this: "An *umbrella*? Why, an *umbrella* is, er, h'm, well, a gadget that opens up and keeps the rain off."

But, literally, an *umbrella* has nothing whatever to do with rain. It is "a sunshade," pure and simple (from the Latin *umbra*, "shade," plus *-ella*, diminutive suffix).

As a matter of fact, there is no word in English that means what we think *umbrella* means. *Parasol*? No. *Parasol* is from *para*- "to parry," and *sol*, "the sun."

It is strange that we should borrow the words *umbrella* and *parasol* and use them interchangeably in the meaning of "a protection from rain," and wholly overlook the grand French word *parapluie* (*para*, "to parry," *pluie*, "rain"), the exact word that is needed.

But, as I have remarked before, our way with words is a marvel to behold.

Umbrella has but three syllables:

um-BREL-luh

VACUUM, NOUN. *An empty space.*

On a network radio program that advertises coffee, the announcer repeatedly and erroneously extols “the coffee that is VAK-yum packed”—erroneously, because: (a) *vacuum* is a three-syllable word, and (b) a true vacuum does not and cannot exist.

Scientists have devised numberless pumps for the production of high-degree vacuums (the plural form *vacua* is also correct), but at the lowest recorded pressure more than one billion molecules (MAH-lee-kyoolz) remain in every cubic centimeter.

Accent the first syllable. The second syllable is exactly like the word *you*; the third syllable rhymes with *hum*.

VAK-yoo-um

VAGARY, NOUN. *A departure from the customary.*

Not “VAY-guh-ree.”

The second syllable, not the first, must receive the accent:

First choice: vuh-GAIR-ee

Second choice: vuh-GAY-ree

VALET, NOUN. *A manservant who takes care of his employer's clothes.*

Although *valet* is a loan word from the French (its original form was *varlet*, “a young noble apprenticed to a knight”), the word has been in common use in the English language for centuries.

It should never be pronounced *valley*, although “VAL-ay,” and “val-AY” are listed as permissible by some dictionaries.

Best usage, however, gives the word its English values. This has been the case since colonial days.

First choice: VAL-et

Second choice: VAL-ay

Third choice: val-AY

Memory Verse

No man is a hero to his valet,
Who insists on rhyming it with Sally.
He who lays out clothes and makes your pallet,
Much prefers to be known as a VAL-et.

VASE, NOUN. *An ornamental vessel for holding flowers.*

In the United States, there apparently is a feeling that, if a vase comes from the five-and-ten, it is simply a "vayss," to rhyme with *case*, *race*. But if it is purchased at one of the more expensive shops, it is dignified by the title "vawz," to rhyme with *laws*.

As a matter of fact, the rhyme with *case*, *race*, has been best American usage for a hundred and fifty years. The "ah" (or aw) vowel sound is strictly a Britishism.

First choice: vayss

Second choice: vayz

Memory Verse

The best pronunciation,
The one that's in first place,
Has Webster's approbation
Thus: simply call it "vayss."

For second choice I search the book
(I find that always pays),
And this is my reward: I learn
That we may call it "vayz."

And now the broad "a" comes to light
'Midst cries of "Oh's!" and "Ah's!"
In dear old England it's quite right
To call the thing a "vahz."

There still another is, although
It makes me bare my claws
To hear this affectation: "What
A rehilly chawming 'vawz'!"

VAUDEVILLE, NOUN. *A theatrical variety show.*

The word *vaudeville*, borrowed from the French, had an original meaning that will surprise even the most seasoned vaudevillians.

In the fifteenth century, near the French town of Voire, Monsieur Olivier Basselin had a mill on a gorge which was called *Vaux-de-Vire*. In his spare time, Basselin wrote many ribald and satirical drinking songs which became famous

throughout France as *vaux-de-vire*. In time, this name was corrupted to *vaudevilles*, and the word meant "popular songs." Later, the term *vaudeville* was used to designate a light musical comedy (*petite pièce de théâtre, mêlée des couplets*). In France today, *vaudeville* is generally applied to a two- or three-act farce comedy with a risqué (rees-KAY) plot, featuring a comedian whose bid for laughs is based on vulgarity (*d'un comique un peu gros*).

American dictionaries sanction two pronunciations, neither of which is the French pronunciation. In the first choice, *vaudevillè* has but two syllables; the first rhymes with *rode*, *mode*. The second choice is the pronunciation commonly heard today, especially in show business:

First choice: VODE-vill

Second choice: VAW-duh-vill

VENI, VIDI, VICI, LATIN. *I came, I saw, I conquered.*

In 47 B.C., Julius Caesar used these words to tell the Senate of his defeat of the King of Pontus.

Either of the following pronunciations is accepted as correct, with a preponderance in favor of the one first listed. In the first choice, the second syllables rhyme with *my*, *by*:

First choice: VEE-ny, VY-dy, VY-sy

Second choice: WAY-nee, WEE-dee, WEE-kee

VENIRE, NOUN. *A list of persons to be called for jury service.*
Not "vuh-NEAR."

This is a word of three syllables:

vee-NY-ree

VERSION, NOUN. *A translation, account, or description.*
Not "VER-zhun."

The second syllable is "shun" as in *portion*, *ocean*, *action*:
VER-shun

VICAR, NOUN. *In England, a title given to certain clergymen.*
Vicar must not rhyme with *piker*.

The correct rhyme is with *flicker*, *thicker*:

VIK-er

VICTUALS, NOUN. *Food for human beings.*

Question: Is the word *victuals* in good standing, and how is it pronounced?

Answer: Although the word is seldom heard in serious speech, it is quite respectable, having its origin in the Latin *victualis*, "pertaining to nourishment."

Do not say "VIK-choo-ulz." In *victuals*, the "c" is silent; the word rhymes with *whittles*:

VIT-t'lz

VIKING, NOUN. *A Northman sea rover.*

A noted American columnist informed his readers that the correct American pronunciation of *viking* was not "VY-king," to rhyme with *hiking*, but "VIK-ing," to rhyme with *licking*.

This, of course, is sheerest nonsense. It is another demonstration of the folly of rushing into print with hearsay evidence on subjects with which one is unacquainted.

The pronunciation "VIK-ing" is listed in no American dictionary known to me. However, "VEE-king" is the alternative of one or two dictionaries published in England. But "VEE-king" is seldom, if ever, heard in the United States.

In the first syllable of *viking*, use the long "i" sound as in *by*, *my*:

VY-king

VIOLONCELLO, NOUN. *A bass violin held between the player's knees.*

Do not say "VY-uh-lin-SHELL'-uh."

The name of this instrument is commonly shortened to *cello*, which should be pronounced, not "SHELL-uh" or "SELL-uh," but: CHELL-oh.

This is a word from the Italian. In that language, "c" before "e" and "i" is like the "ch" in *Chelsea*, not "sh" as in *Shelley* or the "s" sound of *cellar*.

Note that *violon-* is not spelled like *violin*:

VEE-oh-lahn-CHELL'-oh

VIRUS, NOUN. *Liquid poison.*

Do not say "VEAR-us," to rhyme with "fear us."

The correct rhyme is with *fire us*:

VY-russ

VISOR or **VIZOR**, NOUN. *The frontpiece of a cap or helmet.*

Question: Please decide a wager. Does *visor* rhyme with *miser* or with *fizzer*?

Answer: Either is permissible, although the rhyme with *miser* is better in the United States. The rhyme with *miser* is also preferred by the British.

First choice: VY-zer

Second choice: VIZZ-er

VIZ.

Question: What is the exact meaning of *viz.*? How is it pronounced?

Answer: *Viz.* is the abbreviation for the Latin *videlicet*, meaning "it is easy to see." Hence, it is used to mean "namely," "to wit."

Do not say "vizz." Either call it "namely," or "*videlicet*," pronounced:

vee-DELL-i-set

VULNERABLE, IN BRIDGE: *Liable to doubled penalties and increased bonuses.*

It is estimated that about half of those who play contract bridge mispronounce the first syllable to rhyme with *fun*, as "VUN-er-uh-b'l."

It is hard to believe that *vulnerable* and *vulture* have any connection. Yet both words are akin to the Latin *vellere*, "to tear," "to pluck."

Accent the first syllable of *vulnerable*, which should rhyme with *cull*, *dull*, *gull*:

VULL-ner-uh-b'l

Note: *Renegé* is a bridge term that comes from the Latin *renegare*. The word is sometimes spelled "renig."

ree-NIG or ree-NEEG

W, the twenty-third letter of the alphabet.

"W" is one of the most interesting of the Roman letters which make up the alphabets of nearly all modern languages.

"W," the baby of the alphabet, was born in England nine hundred years ago during the Norman Conquest. French scribes introduced it as "vv," to replace the Anglo-Saxon character "wen."

"W" is a double "v" that is called double "u." Why? For the reason that formerly "v" and "u" were considered the same character and were interchanged. "V" for "u" is still seen in inscriptions on cornerstones, façades, and monuments.

There is no "w" in Italian. It is not properly in the French alphabet, being used only in the spelling of certain foreign words. In France, "w" is called *double v* (DOO-bluh VAY).

Latin has no "w," but the Latin "v" is often pronounced like "w."

The German "w" is pronounced like "v." In Welsh, "w" is pronounced "oo." In Polish, when it ends a syllable, "w" is pronounced "f."

In the United States, "w" is commonly mispronounced "DUH-b'l-yuh." Although in form it is a double "v" (vv), in pronunciation, the letter should be a double "u":

DUH-b'l-yoo

WASHINGTON, PROPER NOUN.

National conventions and political campaigns periodically drench the listening public with a horrid flood of slipshod speech, mumbled dronings, and spread-eagle mispronunciations.

The speech pattern the American politico has set up for himself is traditionally and deliberately homespun, and perhaps with good reason.

But, as an orthoëpist devoted to the betterment of American speech, I believe that the revered name *Washington* deserves something better than the customary and shocking contortion: "WAWRSH-in-dun."

For many years, *The Los Angeles Times* has carried on its masthead a phonetic spelling of the name *Los Angeles*. This excellent idea should be borrowed by the newspapers of the state of Washington and of Washington, D. C.; and here is a suggested text:

There is no "r" in Washington. The first syllable has the "ah" sound, as in *watch*, *watt*, *Watson*. The second syllable is *-ing-* and rhymes with *sing*. The third syllable is not *-nun* or *-dun*, but *-tun*:

WAHSH-ing-tun

Memory Verse

(To the tune of "My Maryland")

Of all sad sounds
That go the rounds,
"WAWRSH-in-dun," it's "WAWRSH-in-dun."
I think it queer
That we should hear:
"WAWRSH-in-dun" (oh!) "WAWRSH-in-dun!"
A name that stands for Liberty,
And Freedom's Holy Light, should be
Accorded its full majesty:
WAHSH-ing-tun! Say: WAHSH-ing-tun!

WELSH RABBIT. *A food made of melted cheese.*

Rabbit is not, as many suppose, a corruption of the word *rarebit*. As a matter of fact, the contrary is true. *Rarebit* has no sanction and should not be used.

It is said that the term originated in Wales, where rabbits are seldom found except in game preserves of the gentry. Rabbit meat, therefore, is a luxury denied the common people. Cheese, on the other hand, is both plentiful and inexpensive, and, when melted, is called *the poor man's rabbit*; hence, *Welsh rabbit*.

Another surprise about the term is that Welsh must never have the "ch" sound of *squelch*. Note that Welsh is spelled with "sh," not with "ch," even in the slang expression *to welsh*. Do not say "weltch"; the "sh" is soft, as in *wish*:

welsh RAB-bit

WHARF, NOUN. *A pier or dock for ships.*

Avoid "wawrf."

The "h" must be plainly sounded, but *before* the "w":

hwawrf

SAY WHEN

I keep six honest serving-men
 (They taught me all I knew);
 Their names are What and Why and When
 And How and Where and Who.

—Kipling

The average speaker mistreats four of Rudyard's faithful servitors by calling them "out of their names," as: "w'at," "w'y," "w'en," "w'ere."

Many other "wh" words are likewise mispronounced by carelessly dropping the "h." Watch for this in such words as *which, wharf, whale, wheat, wheel, whether, while, whistle, white*.

To pronounce all these words correctly (except, of course, *how* and *who*), the "h" should be plainly sounded before the "w," as: hwat, hwy, hwen, hwere, hwich.

Indeed, in the original Anglo-Saxon spelling of these words, the "h" invariably came first. *What, when, where, which, why, were: hwaet, hwaenne, hwaer, hwilc, hwi*. Why "h" has come to occupy second place in modern spelling is a story too long to tell here. But careful speakers will not fail to pronounce the "h" properly before the "w."

Say:

hwen

WHETHER, CONJUNCTION. *Indicating an alternative.*

The pronunciations of *whether* and *weather* should be clearly distinguished. The words are not related in any degree. Never say "w'ether or not."

In the correct pronunciation of *whether*, as in *what, when, where, which, why*, the "w" is preceded by the distinct sound of "h." As a matter of fact, the original Anglo-Saxon spelling of *whether* was "hwether," which, many authorities hold, is proof conclusive that the "h" sound before the "w" has, from the beginning, been both customary and correct.

whether: **HWETH-er**

weather: **WETH-er**

This ancient doggerel will serve as an admirable memory verse:

Hwether the weather
Be cold or hot,
We'll always have weather,
Hwether or not.

WIENER, NOUN. *A kind of sausage; the wienerwurst.*

Do not say "WEE-nee."

You may never have thought that there is an actual relationship between the *wiener*, American number one snack, and *Vienna*, the capital city of what once was Austria.

If you were to visit Vienna, you would quickly learn to call the city by its correct name: *Wien* (pronounced: veen). After you had learned something of the German language, you would know that *Wiener* means "of or from Wien (Vienna)." *Wienerwurst*, accordingly, is "the sausage of Vienna."

If you are a native of Vienna, you may pridefully declare: "I am a Wiener." However, if you had but recently arrived upon these shores, you might be at loss to understand the laugh that surely would follow your patriotic boast.

If this seems to be growing unduly complicated, let us compromise on the one-hundred-percent American term *hot dog*.

Wiener is correctly pronounced:

WEE-ner

WISTARIA, NOUN. *A vine with handsome violet or purple flowers.*

The spelling *wisteria* (with "e" instead of "a" in the second syllable) and the resultant mispronunciation "wiss-TEER-i-uh" have been common errors since early in the last century.

The mistake in spelling is charged to the English-American naturalist and writer Thomas Nuttall, who, though he knew that the vine was named for Caspar Wistar, carelessly published the name as *Wisteria*.

So great was Nuttall's authority that the erroneous spelling was accepted without question; and for more than a hundred years it has been in widespread use.

Nevertheless, the spelling *Wistaria* is preferred by the dic-

tionaries and is the only form that has the sanction of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature.

The second syllable should rhyme with *may*, *say*, not with *beer*, *deer*:

wiss-TAY-ree-uh

WONDER FLEA

Once long ago a king lived,
Who kept a fine, fat flea;
And had it been his own son
No dearer could it be.

—Mephistopheles' "Song of the Flea"

It would be rude indeed to suggest that, like the ancient king, my readers harbor fleas. Yet, from our pronouncing vocabularies, most of us could staff a good-sized flea circus with this insect *dramatis personae*:

awe flea for *awfully*
bounty flea for *bountifully*
duty flea for *dutifully*
fancy flea for *fancifully*
mercy flea for *mercifully*
pity flea for *pitifully*
plenty flea for *plentifully*
power flea for *powerfully*

Many well-known "fleas" have deserted the circus and are now starring on commercial radio programs. Announcers rhapsodize over the virtues of this or that soap for washing our clothes "wonder flea" white, for keeping our hands "beauty flea" soft and lovely. They also tell us that the orchestral selection was nothing less than "master flea" rendered.

Nevertheless, the *-fully* of all such words as *wonderfully* should never be pronounced *flea*. Give *-fully* two distinct syllables, the first of which is exactly like the word *full*:

Correct pronunciations:

awfully: AW-full-lee
bountifully: BOUN-ti-full-lee
dutifully: DYOO-ti-full-lee
fancifully: FAN-si-full-lee

mercifully: MER-si-full-lee
pitifully: PIT-i-full-lee
plentifully: PLEN-ti-full-lee
powerfully: POW-er-full-lee

WONT, ADJECTIVE and NOUN. *Accustomed; custom; habit.*

Wont has no connection whatever with the contraction *won't*. In Middle English, the original form of the word was *wunt*, a spelling that accurately indicates the correct pronunciation.

(*Note*: The contraction *won't* is a colloquialism and should not be used in formal writing or speech. It is not, as many believe, a shortened form of *will not*, but a contraction of the obsolete *woll not*. The customary spelling is itself erroneous; it should be *wo'n't*, the apostrophes indicating the dropping of the two "l's" from *woll*, and the "o" from *not*. The form *wo'n't*, however, is never seen in modern print.)

How to use the word: He ate sparingly, as was his *wont*. He was *wont* to eat sparingly.

Do not rhyme *wont* with *won't* or *don't*. The correct rhyme is with *bunt*, *grunt*, *stunt*:

wunt

WORSTED

WORCESTER

WORCESTERSHIRE

Do not speak of the cloth as "WERSS-tid," the Massachusetts city as "WER-sess-ter," the sauce as "WER-sess-ter-shire."

Names of the cloth, the city, and the sauce seem to have little in common except a similarity in spelling. The words, however, are from the names of English cities.

Worsted, *Worcester*, and *Worcestershire* are not pronounced as they are spelled, but according to an unintelligible and mystic rule of telescoping which even the British themselves find to be beyond the reach of human understanding.

The vowel sound in the first syllable of these words is the "ō" of *wood*, *wool*; the "r" in *wor-* is silent:

worsted: WOOS-ted
Worcester: WOOS-ter
Worcestershire: WOOS-er-sheer
 or
 WOOS-ter-sheer

WOUND, NOUN. *An injury to the body.*

The pronunciation of *wound* has long been a matter of debate. "Wownd," to rhyme with *found*, formerly was held to be the only acceptable pronunciation; "woond," to rhyme with *swooned*, was regarded as an extreme and particularly offensive affectation, as the following anecdote will show:

Early in the last century, a certain professor, while in conversation with a lady of gentle birth, repeatedly used the pronunciation "wownd." "Why," she asked, "do you not call that word 'woond'?" Fixing her with his steely, learned eye, the fusty pedagogue replied: "Because, madam, I have never foond sufficient groond that it should have that soond!"

But today, the rhyme with *swooned* is best usage almost everywhere, although the rhyme with *found* is not infrequently heard among physicians and surgeons.

A registered nurse of St. Louis explains the "wownd" pronunciation thus, although I do not vouch for the theory: "When surgeons use the 'wownd' pronunciation, it is, I am sure, to designate a surgically made wound. They would say that the man was 'woonded' in battle; but if his treatment involved surgery, the subsequent break in the tissues of the body—or even the former one after surgical treatment—would be spoken of as a 'wownd.'"

Correct pronunciations:

First choice: woond
Second choice: wownd

XYLOPHONE, NOUN. *A musical instrument of wooden bars to be struck by mallets or hammers.*

Do not say "ek-ZILL-uh-fone."

Xylophone is from the Greek *xylo-*, meaning "wood," and *-phone*, meaning "sound" or "voice."

The "x" has the sound of "z." The "y" is as in *my*.

ZY-luh-fone or ZILL-uh-fone

YE. DEFINITE ARTICLE. *The.*

Question: We have an antique store. The name is "Ye Rummage Shoppe." How should *ye* be pronounced?

Answer: It will be news to many readers that the pronunciation is not "yee."

The definite article *ye* has an interesting history. In Old and Middle English, prior to the sixteenth century, the sound of "th" was spelled with an Anglo-Saxon character called *thorn*. In appearance, *thorn* was a cross between "p" and "y." This is the character: þ

Such words as *the*, *then*, *thin*, *this* were not spelled with "th," but with *thorn*, as: þe, þen, þin, þis. After the invention of printing, *thorn* was dropped from the alphabet, and for a while the letter "y" took its place in the spelling of "th" words.

The "y" for "th" survives today only in the obsolete word *ye*. Thus we see that *ye* is simply an archaic way of spelling the article *the*. The correct pronunciation of the article *ye* is exactly as the form *the* is pronounced: "thee" before vowels, and "thuh" before consonants.

Note: The pronoun *ye*, as in "all ye who labor," is pronounced "yee." But do not confuse the pronoun with the article. They have nothing in common except the spelling.

YEAST, NOUN. *A minute fungus that induces fermentation.*

The frequently heard "eest" has no sanction.

The "y" should be distinctly sounded:

yeest

YOUR, PRONOUN AND ADJECTIVE. *Of or belonging to you.*

Attention singers, speakers, teachers, actors, and broadcasters!

The pronunciation "yore," to rhyme with *core*, *bore*, *more*, is not sanctioned by an American dictionary. It is not even dignified by a listing as colloquial or dialectal.

Why, then, is "yore" the preferred pronunciation of the cream of American radio announcers? The only explanation is, the cream must have soured. Every day, on almost every radio program, we hear: "yore skin," "yore hands," "yore

teeth," "yore complexion," "yore druggist," "yore announcer," "yore hit parade."

This book invites—nay, urges—broadcasters, actors, and singers to refer to any standard American dictionary. It will be seen that the only pronunciation listed for *your* and the contraction *you're* rhymes with *tour*, *moor*, *cure*:

your }
you're } yoor

Memory Verse

Announcers, may we have your ears?
Into them we would pour
This plea: Stop driving us to tears
By always saying "yore."

Your vibrant tones, your vocal grace,
Your accents suave would bore
Us less, we tell you face to face,
If you'd stop saying "yore."

The dictionaries can't be wrong,
Of that you may be sure;
So get it right in ad and song:
Say *your* and *you're* as "yoor."

Z, the twenty-sixth letter of the alphabet.

"Z" came into English from the Latin. The Latin got it from the Greek *zeta*. The Greek got it from the Hebrew *zayin*, also spelled *zain*. It is not known what sound "z" represented in ancient Greek.

"Z" was formerly pronounced: "IZ-erd." It is now pronounced:

zee

ZOO

Question: If *zoo* is correct, why isn't it correct to pronounce *zoological* as "zoo-logical"?

Answer: *Zoo* is a corrupted abbreviation for *zoological garden*. The Greek *zoo-*, denoting "animal," is pronounced "ZOE-oh," to rhyme with *oh*, *oh*. *Zoological*, then, is correctly pronounced:

ZOE-oh-LAH'-jee-k'l

ZOOLOGY, NOUN. *The science that treats of animals.*

This word is so universally mispronounced "zoo-AHL-oh-jee" (the first syllable rhyming with *coo*, *woo*) that the form *zoo* for *zoological garden* has achieved the status of good usage.

Nevertheless, "zoo-AHL-oh-jee" obviously is incorrect, for that pronunciation would call for a spelling with three "o's" in a row: *zoology*, making it a monstrosity among words.

The first syllable must rhyme with *toe*, *woe*:

zoe-AHL-oh-jee

Zoological is correctly pronounced:

ZOE-oh-LAH'-jee-k'l

ZWIEBACK, NOUN. *A kind of bread.*

The most frequently heard pronunciation is "ZWY-bak," but best usage pronounces the word in accordance with German rules.

Make it rhyme with *we hock*:

TSVEE-bahk

V

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

LORD BYRON said, "'Tis pleasant, sure, to see one's name in print." To which I should like to add that one's name is the divinest sound that ever flows through the ear and spills itself on the tympanum like honey on a flapjack.

A man's good name ranks high among the things that he cherishes most in life. Shakespeare phrased it thus: ". . . but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which . . . makes me poor indeed."

Yet men have had family names or surnames for less than nine hundred years. Second names were first adopted in densely populated areas, not with the idea of indicating family relationship, but to distinguish the many Johns, Williams, Pauls, etc., from one another.

Names of prehistoric men, it is fairly certain, were merely descriptive of the individual, as: Hairy One, Good Hunter, Strong Arm, Swift Runner, Fierce Fighter, for many such names survive today in Long, Stout, Hardy, White, Swift, Strong, Good, Little, Wise.

In Biblical days, second names were likewise descriptive, and had no family significance: Joshua son of Nun, John the Baptist, Judas of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth.

In the Middle Ages, a few second names began to grow out of nicknames: Henry of the strong arm became Henry Armstrong; little John became John Little; dark-complexioned William became William Black.

Other second names sprang from the father's name: Wil-

liam the son of John became William Johnson. But William's son James did not call himself James Johnson. No; he, too, took his father's first name, and became James William-son. So again the second name identified the individual, and did not designate lineage.

Many *-son* names survive today in most nationalities: the English *-son*, the Norman *Fitz* (from the French *filz*, "son") as in Fitzgerald, the Irish *O'* as in O'Malley, the Gaelic *Mc* and *Mac* as in McCormick and MacDonald, the German *von* as in von Ribbentrop, the French *de* as in de Gaulle, and the Italian *-ini* as in Mussolini, all mean "son of," "from," "kin of" or "of the clan of."

Large numbers of second names grew quite naturally from occupations: Merchant, Smith, Taylor, Baker, Weaver, Wright, Barber, Skinner, Mason, Miller, Carpenter, Sawyer, Hunter, Fisher, Painter, Cook, Farmer.

Official titles, too, evolved into second names: Mayor, Sheriff, Chamberlain, Deacon, Prior, Priest, Squire, Knight, Lord, Earl, Duke, Prince, King.

Even today most names have a meaning or are variations of names that once had meanings: *Schneider* is German for "tailor"; *Campbell* means "crooked-lip"; *Roosevelt* is Dutch for "rose field"; *La Salle* is French for "the room"; *Hauptmann* means "captain"; *Capone* is Italian for "a stubborn fellow"; *Fiorello* (*La Guardia*) means "little flower."

Second names were not regarded as hereditary until after the year 1000 A.D., and the custom did not become universal for another five hundred years.

Many surnames have remained unchanged through the centuries, while others have undergone so many variations in form as to furnish no clue to their origins. And the process of change is still going on, especially in the United States, where there is a strong tendency to Anglicize most names of foreign origin: *Schneider*, *Müller*, *Triantafyllou*, *Kowalczyk*, are being translated literally into *Taylor*, *Miller*, *Rose*, *Smith*.

Scores of names of cumbersome spelling are being simplified: *Chumley* from *Cholmondeley*, *Beacham* from *Beauchamp*, *Tolliver* from *Talliaferro*, *Marchbanks* from *Marjori-*

banks, *Nobel* from Knoebel, *Doolittle* from de l'Hotel, *Peabody* from Pibaudiere.

In the United States, one person in every forty bears the name Smith. Other leading names follow in this order: Johnson, Brown, Williams, Jones, Miller, Davis, Anderson, Wilson, Moore.

Many readers have asked, "What is the correct way to pronounce my name?" There are no set rules by which we in America may be guided, and, above all, we dare not trust to the spelling of a name to give us its pronunciation.

There is but one answer to the question of name pronunciation: the pronunciation that is customary in your immediate family is the correct one for you.

In the pages that follow, the reader will find scores of familiar personal names that are almost invariably mispronounced. Since the pronunciations in this section are well documented and are as nearly correct as the limitations of phonetic spelling will permit, public speakers, broadcasters especially, should find this section to be a reference of more than little value.

It must be kept in mind, however, that most foreign languages contain many sounds that are never heard in English and which cannot be exactly represented or duplicated by any known system of English phonetic spelling. A few pronunciations in this section, then, are to be regarded as being only approximately correct.

ADAMIC, LOUIS. Yugoslav-American author. Accent the second syllable:

a-DAM-ik

ADONIS. See page 36.

AGA KHAN, III. Religious leader of the Ismaelian Mohammedans.

AH-gah KAHN

ALFIERI, DINO, Count. Italian statesman.

ahl-FYAY-ree, DEE-noe

D'ANNUNZIO, GABRIELLE. Italian poet and novelist.

dahn-NOON-dzee-oh, gah-bree-EL-ay

ANTONESCU, ION. Premier of Rumania. *Ion* is the Rumanian form of the name *John*. It rhymes with *lone*:

ahn-toe-NAY-skoo, yone

APHRODITE. See ADONIS, page 36.

D'ARC, JEANNE. French heroine of the fifteenth century, commonly called *Joan of Arc*. The "a" in *Arc* is almost as flat as in the first syllable of *arrogant*:

DARK, zhahn

ATATURK. Title given to MUSTAFA KEMAL, PASHA, former president of Turkey. The "u" in *Ataturk* is like the French "u" in *rue, vu*:

ah-tah-türk

Mustafa is accented on the first syllable. *Kemal* and *Pasha* are accented on the second syllable:

MÖOS-tah-fah kuh-MAHL, pa-SHAH

ATTILA. King of the Huns in the fifth century. Accent the first syllable only:

AT-i-luh

BACKHOUSE, SIR EDMUND. English nobleman. The second syllable of *Backhouse* rhymes with *fuss, muss*:

BAK-uss

BADEN-POWELL, ROBERT STEVENSON SMYTH. Baron. English founder of the Boy Scouts. *Baden* rhymes with *maiden*. *Powell* rhymes with *Lowell*:

BAY-d'n-POE-ull

BAEKELAND, LEO HENDRIK. Belgium-American chemist, inventor of bakelite. (See BAKELITE, page 59.)

BAY-kuh-land

BAIRNSFATHER, BRUCE. British writer and artist.

BAHRNZ-fah-ther

BALBO, ITALO. Officer of the Italian air force.

BAHL-boe, ee-tahl-oh

BENEŠ, EDOUARD. Former president of Czechoslovakia.

BEN-esh, ED-wahrd

BERSERK. See page 62.

BERTILLON, ALPHONSE. French anthropologist. Father of the Bertillon System of fingerprint classification. *Bertillon* is not pronounced "ber-TILL-yun." The American pro-

nunciation is: BER-ti-lun. However, in referring to the man, give the name its French values:

bair-tee-YAW(N), al-FAW(N)SS

BLASCO, IBÁÑEZ. Spanish novelist.

BLAHSS-koe, ee-bahn-YAITH

BLERIOT, LOUIS. French flyer and aeronautical engineer.

blair-ee-OH, loo-EE

BLUM, LÉON. Former President of France. In *Blum* the "u" has the French sound as in *rue, tu, vu*. Do not rhyme the name with *plum*.

BLŪM, lay-AW(N)

BOCCACCIO, GIOVANNI. Italian author of the *Decameron* and other novels.

boek-KAH-choe, joe-VAHN-nee

BORGLUM, GUTZON. American sculptor.

BAWR-glum, GUT-sun

BOTTICELLI, SANDRO. Italian painter of the fifteenth century.

bah-tee-CHELL-ee, SAHN-droe

BOURBON. Royal family of France. Not "BER-bun." Give the name its French values. The "n" is nasalized:

boor-BAW(N)

BRaille, LOUIS. Inventor of the Braille System of printing for the blind. In the United States the system is called *brail*, to rhyme with *frail*. But in speaking of the man, give the name the French values:

BRAH-yuh

BRANDEIS, LOUIS D. Former Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The second syllable of *Brandeis* rhymes with *ice, mice*.

BRAN-dice

BROUN, HEYWOOD. American author and dramatic critic. *Broun* rhymes with *croon*:

BROON, HAY-wood

CABELL, JAMES BRANCH. American novelist. *Cabell* rhymes with *gabble, rabble*:

KAB-b'1

CALLIOPE. See MUSEUM, page 83.

CALVÉ, EMMA. French opera singer. Accent the second syllable:

kal-VAY

CAMACHO, MANUEL AVILA. Elected president of Mexico in 1940.

kah-MAH-choe, mahn-WELL AH-vee-lah

ČAPEK, KAREL. Czechoslovakian novelist, author of *R. U. R.*, from which play we have the word *robot*. The "Č" of Čapek has the "ch" sound as in *chop*:

(See **ROBOT**, page 222.)

CHAH-pek, KAH-rell

CAPONE, AL. Notorious ex-convict. (In Italian, *Capone* means "hard-headed; stubborn fellow.")

United States: kuh-PONE

Italian: kah-POE-nay

CARDOZO, BENJAMIN NATHAN. Late Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

kahr-DOE-zoe

CARNEGIE, ANDREW. Scoto-American philanthropist. Carnegie is accented on the second syllable; the "g" is hard:

kahr-NAY-gee

CAROL II. Deposed king of Rumania. Not "KAIR-ull" as in English. The name rhymes with *car roll*:

KAH-role

CARUSO, ENRICO. Italian operatic tenor. The "s" is pronounced "z":

kah-ROO-zoe, en-REE-koe

CASANOVA DE SEINGALT. Italian adventurer and famous lover.

KAH-sah-NAW'-vah, day SINE-gahlt

CATHER, WILLA. American novelist. *Cather* rhymes with *lather*:

KATH-er, WILL-uh

CELLINI, BENVENUTO. Italian artist and writer of the sixteenth century.

chell-EE-nee, ben-vay-NOO-toe

DE CERVANTES, SAAVEDRA. Spanish author of *Don Quixote*.

day ther-VAHN-tayss, sah-ah-VAY-drah

CHALIAPIN, FEODOR. Russian opera singer.

shahl-YAH-peen, fay-AWR-dore

CHEOPS. KHUFU. Egyptian king. Builder of the pyramid near Gizeh.

KEE-ahps. KOO-foo

CHEVALIER, MAURICE. French actor and singer.

shuh-val-YAY, moe-REESS

CHEVROLET. See page 77.

CHIANG KAI-SHEK. Chinese generalissimo.

Webster's: chee-AHNG KY-SHEK

Charles E. Funk: jyang gy-shak

CIANO, GALEAZZO, Count. Italian official and son-in-law of Mussolini.

CHAH-noe, gahl-YAHT-soe

CLEMENCEAU, GEORGES. Premier of France during World War I. Do not pronounce the "s" in *Georges*:

kluh-mah(n)-SOE, zhawrz

CLEOPATRA. See MUSEUM, page 183.

CLIO. See MUSEUM, page 183.

COHAN, GEORGE. American actor and playwright. Do not pronounce *Cohan* as you would the name *Cohen*. *Cohan* is Irish. Accent the second syllable:

koe-HAN

COHEN, OCTAVUS ROY. American author, famous for his stories about Negroes. *Octavus* is accented on the second syllable, which rhymes with the word *have*:

KOE-enn, ahk-TAV-uss

COLBERT, CLAUDETTE. French-American motion picture actress. The "t" in *Colbert* is not pronounced; accent the second syllable of both names:

kawl-BAIR, kloe-DETT

CONFUCIUS. Ancient Chinese philosopher. His correct Chinese name is Kung-fu-tse:

kōōng-foo-TSEE

COUÉ, ÉMILE. French psychotherapist ("Every day in every way I am becoming better and better.")

koo-AY, ay-MEEL

COWPER, WILLIAM. English poet of the eighteenth century.

KOO-per

CRICHTON, JAMES. Learned and accomplished Scotsman, known as *The Admirable Crichton*.

KRY-tun

CROESUS. See page 92.

CULBERTSON, ELY. American contract bridge expert. *Ely* rhymes with *Sealy, mealy*:

KULL-bert-s'n, EE-lee

CURIE, MARIE. Co-developer of radium. In *Curie* the "u" has the French sound as in *rue, tu, vu*:

kü-REE, ma-REE

DALADIER, ÉDOUARD. Former premier of France. Accent both names on the last syllable:

da-la-DYAY, aid-WAR

DANTE, ALIGHIERI. Italian poet of the fourteenth century. Author of *The Divine Comedy*.

DAHN-tay, ah-lee-GYAIR-ee

DARLAN, JEAN, Admiral. Vice Premier of the French (Vichy) government during World War II. The "a" in the first syllable of *Darlan* is flat, as in *arrogant*:

dar-LAH(N), zhah(n)

DAVIS, BETTE. American motion picture actress. *Bette* is not pronounced "bet." It rhymes with *Hetty*:

BET-tee

DE CASSERES, BENJAMIN. American author and critic.

dee-KASS-er-ess

DE GAULLE, CHARLES. Commander of the Free French forces in World War II. Do not rhyme *Gaulle* with *Paul, haul*. It rhymes with *pole, hole*. The "s" in *Charles* is not pronounced. The "a" is almost as flat as in the first syllable of *arrogant*:

duh GOLE, sharl

DELMAR, VIÑA. American novelist and writer of short stories.

dell-MAHR, VEEN-yah

DEMOSTHENES. Athenian orator of the fourth century B.C.

dee-MAHSS-thuh-neeZ

DE VALERA, EAMON. President of the Irish Free State.

day val-AY-rah, AY-mun

DIES, MARTIN. Official of United States government. *Dies* rhymes with *lies, pies*:

dize

DIETRICH, MARLENE. German-American motion picture actress.

DEE-trik, mahr-LAY-nuh

DIONNE (Quintuplets). See page 213.

DREISER, THEODORE. American author. *Dreiser* rhymes with *slicer*:

DRY-ser

DU BARRY, JEANNE. Favorite of Louis XV. Not "DOO berry." In *du* the "u" is as in *rue, tu, vu*. The "a" in *Barry* is flat as in the first syllable of *arrogant*. Accent the second syllable:

dü ba-REE, zhahn

DUMAS, ALEXANDRE. French novelist of the nineteenth century. Author of *The Three Musketeers*. Do not pronounce the "s" in *Dumas*. The "u" is the French "u" as in *rue, tu, vu*:

dü-MAH, al-eks-AH(N)-druh

EPICURUS. See EPICUREAN, page 112.

ERATO. See MUSEUM, page 183.

EURIPIDES. Greek dramatist of the fifth century B.C.

yoo-RIP-i-deez

EUTERPE. See MUSEUM, page 183.

FAHRENHEIT, GABRIEL. German physicist and developer of the thermometric scale known by his name.

FAH-ren-hite, GAHB-ree-el

FATIMA. Only daughter of Mohammed. Do not say "fuh-TEE-muh." The name is accented on the first syllable:

FAH-tee-mah

(See FATIMA, page 119.)

FOCH, FERDINAND. Commander in chief of the Allied armies in France during World War I. *Foch* does not rhyme with *gosh*. The vowel sound is "AW" as in *law*:

FAWSH, fair-dee-NAH(N)

FOKKER, ANTON HERMANN. Dutch designer and builder of aircraft.

FAH-ker, AHN-tone HAIR-mahn

GANDHI, MAHATMA. Hindu nationalist leader.

Webster's: GAHN-dee, mah-HAHT-mah

Charles E. Funk: GAHN-thee, mah-HAHT-mah

GARAND. See page 127.

GATTI-CASAZZA, GIULIO. Italo-American opera director and impresario.

GAH-tee-kah-SAHT'-sah, JOOL-yoe

GAYDA, VIRGINIO. Italian newspaper editor, official spokesman for Mussolini in World War II. The "g" in *Gayda* is hard:

GY-dah, veer-JEEN-yoe

GENGHIS KHAN. See page 127.

GOEBBELS, PAUL JOSEPH. Nazi minister of propaganda during the Hitler régime. The "u" of Goebbels is approximately the "u" of *urn*, *burn*. *Paul* rhymes with *howl*. The "j" of *Joseph* is pronounced "y."

GU-belz, powl YOE-seff

GOERING, HERMANN WILHELM. High Nazi official and commander in chief of German armies in World War II. Do not rhyme *Goering* with *herring*. The name is a fair rhyme for *purring*, *slurring*:

GUR-ing, HAIR-mahn VILL-helm

VON GOETHE, JOHANN WOLFGANG. German author. The vowel sound of *Goethe* is similar to the "u" of *urn*, *burn*, but without the sound of "r":

fun GU-tuh, YOE-hahn VOELF-gahngk

VAN GOGH, VINCENT. In *Gogh* the "o" is long, as in *toe*. The name begins and ends with the German fricative sound of "ch," as in *ach*, *ich*:

vahn (CH)OE(CH), VEEN-sent

GRAZIANI, RODOLFO. Former commander of the Italian army in Libya during World War II.

GRAHT-see-AH'-nee, roe-DAWL-foe

GUILLOTIN. See page 132.

HAILE SELASSIE. Emperor of Ethiopia.

HY-lee sel-LAHSS-ee

HEIFETZ, JASCHA. Russo-American violinist.

HY-fets, YAH-shah

HENIE, SONJA. Actress and ice-skating champion.

HEN-ee, SONE-yah

HERGESHEIMER, JOSEPH. American novelist.

HER'-gess-HY-mer

HIPPOCRATES. Greek physician, father of medicine, and author of the Hippocratic Oath.

hi-PAHK-ruh-teez

HIROHITO. Emperor of Japan since 1926.

HEE-roe-HEE'-toe

HITLER. See BERCHTESGADEN, page 62.

HOHENZOLLERN. Name of the royal family of Germany.

HOE'-en-TSOE-lern

VON HORTHY, NICHOLAS. Former regent of Hungary.

fun HAWR-tee, NEE-koe-lahss

HOUGH, EMERSON. American novelist, and author of *The Covered Wagon*. *Hough* rhymes with *buff*, *cuff*:

huff

HRDLICKA, ALEŠ. Czechoslovakian anthropologist. The second syllable of *Hrdlicka* rhymes with *ditch*:

HERD-litch-kah, AH-lesh

ICKES, HAROLD L. Appointed Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior in 1933.

IK-uss

INGE, WILLIAM RALPH. Dean. English churchman and author. *Inge* does not rhyme with *dinge*, *hinge*. It rhymes with *ring*, *sing*:

ing

ITURBI, JOSÉ. Pianist and orchestra conductor.

ee-TOOR-bee, hoe-SAY

JEKYLL, Doctor. See page 154.

JERITZA, MARIA. Operatic soprano. The "j" has the sound of "y." The "e" is short, as in *yet*:

YE-rit-sah, mah-REE-ah

JOFFRE, JOSEPH JACQUES CÉSAIRE. Marshal of France. Died 1931.

ZHAWF-ruh, zhoe-ZEFF zhak say-ZAIR

JOHN. For variations of this name, see page 155.

JUÁREZ, BENITO. President of Mexico in the nineteenth century. Do not say "wah-REZZ." Accent the first syllable; the second syllable rhymes with *face*, *space*.

HWAH-race, bay-NEE-toe

(See JUÁREZ, page 156.)

KNUDSEN, WILLIAM S. American automobile manufacturer; United States defense official during World War II. Do not sound the "k":

NYOOD-sen

KRUPP. Family name of German manufacturers of guns. The name does not rhyme with *cup*, *pup*. The vowel sound is the "oo" of *foot*, *book*:

krööp

LA FOLLETTE, ROBERT MARION. United States Senator. Died 1925. Not "lah fuh-LET." Accent the second syllable:

lah FAH-let

LA GUARDIA, FIORELLO. Mayor of New York; United States defense official during World War II.

lah GWAHR-dee-ah, fee-oh-RELL-loe

LAUGHTON, CHARLES. English motion picture actor. Do not pronounce the "gh" in *Laughton*:

LAW-tun

LAVAL, PIERRE. Official of the Vichy government of France during World War II. In *Laval* the "a's" are almost as flat as in *gal*, *pal*:

la-VAL, pee-YAIR

LEBRUN, ALBERT. Deposed president of France. Not "AL-bert lee-BROON." In *Lebrun* the "n" is nasalized.

The "t" in *Albert* is not pronounced. Accent both names on the second syllable:

luh-BRAH(N), al-BAIR

LE GALLIENNE, EVA. American actress and theatrical producer.

Webster's: luh GAL-i-un

Charles E. Funk: luh gal-i-ENN

LENIN. See page 160.

DE LISLE, ROUGET. See **LA MARSEILLAISE**, page 170.

LITVINOV, MAXIM. Soviet Russian foreign commissar. Accent *Litvinov* on the second syllable; the third syllable rhymes with *loaf*:

lit-VEE-noaf, MAHK-seem

LOUIS XIV. See **LOUISIANA**, page 167.

LUPESCU, MAGDA. Woman companion of Carol, former king of Rumania. (Correct first name is *Elena*, pronounced: el-AY-nah.)

loo-PAY-skoo, MAHG-dah

MACHIAVELLI, NICCOLO DI BERNARDO. Italian political writer.

MAH-kyah-VELL'-lee,

NEE-koe-loe

dee bair-NAHR-doe

McMEIN, NEYSA. American illustrator (correct name *Baragwanath*, pronounced: bahr-uh-GWAHN-ath).

mak-MEEN, NEE-suh

McPHERSON, AIMEE SEMPLE. Woman evangelist of California. The second syllable of *McPherson* is not *fear*; it rhymes with *her*, *per*:

mak-FER-sun

MAETERLINCK, MAURICE. Belgian writer. Nobel prize winner in 1911.

MAH-ter-lingk, mo-REESS

MAGINOT, ANDRÉ. Late French war minister who designed the famous Maginot Line fortifications at the

Franco-German border. The "a" in *Maginot* is flat, approximately as in *mat*. Do not pronounce the final "t." The "n" in *André* is nasalized:

mazh-i-NOE, ah(n)-DRAY

MARIE ANTOINETTE. Wife of Louis XVI of France. Executed 1793.

ma-REE ah(n)-twa-NETT

MASARYK, THOMAS. First president of Czechoslovakia.

mah-sa-REEK, TOE-mahss

MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET. British novelist.

mawm

DE MAUPASSANT, GUY. French novelist and writer of short stories. The "g" in *Guy* is hard:

duh moe-pa-SAH(N), gee

MAXIMILIAN. Austrian emperor of Mexico. Executed 1867.

MAHKS-i-MEE'-lee-ahn

DE' MEDICI, CATHERINE. Wife of King Henry II of France.

day MAY-dee-chee

MELPOMENE. See MUSEUM, page 183.

MENJOU, ADOLPHE. American motion picture actor. Pronounce the name according to French rules:

mah(n)-ZHOO, a-DAWLF

MENUHIN, YEHUDI. American concert violinist.

MEN-yoo-in, yeh-HOO-dee

MERKEL, UNA. American motion picture actress.

MER-k'l, YOO-nuh

MORGENTHAU, Henry, Jr. Secretary of the Treasury during the Roosevelt administration. The third syllable of *Morgenthau* has the exact sound of the word *thaw*:

MAWR-g'n-thaw

MORPHEUS. See page 181.

MÜNCHAUSEN, Baron. A fictitious inventor of marvelous tales.

mun-CHAW-z'n

MUSSOLINI. See page 183.

NAZIMOVA, ALLA. Russian-American actress.
na-ZEE-moe-va

OMAR KHAYYÁM. See page 191.

OUIMET, FRANCIS. Professional golfer.
WEE-met

PADEREWSKI. See page 194.

VON PAPEN, FRANZ. Nazi diplomat.
fun PAH-pen, frahnts

PASTEUR. See page 196.

PENELOPE. See page 197.

PEPYS, SAMUEL. English writer and diarist.
First choice: peeps
Second choice: peps
Third choice: PEP-iss

PÉTAIN, HENRI PHILIPPE. Premier of the Vichy government of France during World War II.
pay-TA(N), aw(n)-REE fee-LEEP

PICASSO, PABLO. Spanish sculptor and painter.
pee-KAHSS-soe, PAHB-loe

PICCARD, AUGUSTE. Swiss scientist in Belgium. Famous for his stratosphere flights. The "a" in *Piccard* is flat, approximately as in the first syllable of *arrogant*:
pee-KAR

POINCARÉ, RAYMOND. President of France. Died 1934.
pwa(n)-ka-RAY, ray-MAW(N)

POLYMNIA. See MUSEUM, page 183.

PONCE DE LEÓN. Spanish explorer who discovered Florida while searching for the fountain of youth.
PONE-thay, day lay-OAN

POWYS, JOHN COWPER. English author. The first syllable of *Powys* is like the name *Poe*:
POE-iss

PSYCHE. See page 212.

PTOLEMY. Name of an Egyptian dynasty. (See CLEOPATRA, page 81.)

TAHL-ee-mee

PULITZER, JOSEPH. Hungarian-American journalist. Father of the Pulitzer prizes. The name originally was pronounced: PULL-it-ser. It was later Anglicized to:

PEW-lit-ser

QUEZON, MANUEL. President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. The first syllable of *Quezon* has the short "e" sound of *get*.

KE-zone, mahn-WELL

RABELAIS, FRANÇOIS. French physician and satirist.

rab-LAY, frah(n)-SWAH

REMARQUE, ERICH. German author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and other novels.

ruh-MAHRK, AY-ri(ch)

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN. Dutch painter of the seventeenth century.

REM-brahnt vahn RINE

VON REUTER, PAUL. Founder of the Reuter's News Agency, in England. *Paul* rhymes with *howl*.

fun ROY-ter, powl

ZU REVENTLOW, ERNST, Count. German journalist.

tsoo RAY-vent-loe, airnst

REYNAUD, PAUL. Former premier of France.

ray-NOE, pawl

VON RIBBENTROP, JOACHIM. High Nazi official and trusted Hitler aide during World War II. The "ch" of Joachim has the German fricative sound as in *ach*, *dich*.

fun RIB-ben-trope, yoe-ah-(CH)EEM

DE RICHELIEU, ARMAND. French statesman and cardinal of the seventeenth century. The vowel sound of the third syllable of *Richelieu* is approximately the "u" of *urn*, *burn*:

duh ree-shul-YU, ar-MAH(N)

RIVERA, DIEGO. Mexican painter of murals.

ree-VAY-rah, DYAY-goe

ROCKNE, KNUTE. Late football coach of Notre Dame college.

RAHK-nee, kuh-NOOT

ROENTGEN, WILHELM KONRAD. German scientist. Discoverer of Roentgen rays. The vowel sound of the first syllable of *Roentgen* is approximately the "u" of *urn*, *burn*. The "g" is hard:

RUNT-gen, VILL-helm KONE-rah

ROMANOV. Family name of the czars of Russia. Accent the second syllable, and rhyme the third syllable with *loaf*:

roe-MAH-noaf

ROOSEVELT. See page 223.

ROUSSEAU, PIERRE ÉTIENNE. French landscape artist of the nineteenth century.

roo-SOE, pee-YAIR ay-TYEN

DE SANTA ANNA, ANTONIO LÓPEZ. Mexican dictator-president. Defeated by General Sam Houston in the battle of San Jacinto.

day SAHN-tah AHN-nah, ahn-TOE-nee-oh LOE-pace

SANTAYANA, GEORGE. American philosopher and poet.

sahn-tah-YAH-nah

SANTOS-DUMONT, ALBERTO. Brazilian aeronaut, hero of early flights in France. The "u" in *Dumont* is the French "u" as in *rue*, *tu*, *vu*:

sah(n)-TOESS-dü-MAW(N)', al-BAIR-toe

SAROYAN, WILLIAM. Armenian-American author and playwright. The second syllable of *Saroyan* does not rhyme with *boy*; it rhymes with *toe*:

sah-ROE-yun

SCHILDKRAUT, JOSEPH. Austro-American actor. The "d" is pronounced "t":

SHILT-krout

SCHIPA, TITO. Italian operatic tenor.

SKEE-pah, TEE-toe

SEMBRICH, MARCELLA. Austro-American operatic soprano. In *Sembrich*, the "ch" is the German fricative sound, as in *ach*, *ich*:

ZEM-bri(ch), mahr-SAY-lah

SHEARER, NORMA. American motion picture actress. *Shearer* does not rhyme with *dearer*. It is a fair rhyme for *her*, *per*, one syllable only:

sher

SIKORSKY, IGOR I. Airplane designer and builder.

see-KAWR-skee, EE-gawr

DE SILHOUETTE, ÉTIENNE. French financier, for whom silhouettes were named.

duh see-loo-ETT, ay-TYEN

(See **SILHOUETTE**, page 230.)

SCHMELING, MAX. German heavyweight boxer, reported wounded in the parachute invasion of the island of Crete during World War II.

SHMAY-lingk, mahks

SOCRATES. Athenian philosopher of the fifth century B.C.

SAHK-ruh-teez

SOPHOCLES. Greek poet of the fifth century B.C.

SAHF-oh-kleez

SOUSA. See page 234.

SPAETH, SIGMUND. Music critic.

SPAITH, SIG-mund

VON SPEE, MAXIMILIAN, Count. German naval commander. The *Graf Spee*, pocket battleship, was named for him.

fun SHPAY, MAHKS-i-MEE'-lee-ahn

STALIN, JOSEF VISSARIONOVITCH.

STAH-leen, ee-AW-siff yee-Sahr-ee-YAWN'-oh-veetch

STEINMETZ, CHARLES PROTEUS. German-American electrical genius. Died 1923.

STINE-mets, ——— PROE-tyooss

STOKOWSKI, LEOPOLD. English-American orchestra conductor.

stoe-KAWF-skee

STRADIVARIUS, ANTONIUS. Violin maker of Cremona.
Died 1737.

STRAD-i-VAY'-ree-uss, ahn-TOE-nee-uss

SWARTHOUT, GLADYS. American concert soprano.

SWAHRTH-out

TERHUNE, ALBERT PAYSON. Dog fancier and writer.
The accent falls on the second syllable of *Terhune*, which
is like the word *hewn*:

ter-HEWN

TERPSICHORE. See MUSEUM, page 183.

TETRAZZINI, LUISA. Italian operatic soprano.

TET-raht-SEE'-nee, loo-EE-sah

THALIA. See MUSEUM, page 183.

TITIAN. See page 243.

TOSCANINI, ARTURO. See page 246.

TUNNEY, GENE. Former heavyweight boxing champion.
Do not pronounce the first syllable of *Tunney* as "too."
The name rhymes with *funny*:

TUN-ee

URANIA. See MUSEUM, page 183.

VAN LOON, HENDRIK WILLEM. Dutch-American
author and historian. Do not rhyme *Loon* with *boon*. It
is pronounced as if it were spelled *lone*:

van LONE, HEN-drik VILL-em

VESPUCCI, AMERIGO. Italian sailor for whom America
was named.

ves-POOT-chee, AH-may-REE'-goe

VILLA, PANCHE. Mexican revolutionary leader and gen-
eral. In Mexican the "ll" in *Villa* has the sound of "y":

VEE-yah, PAHN-choe

DA VINCI, LEONARDO. Italian painter of the sixteenth
century (*Mona Lisa*, etc.).

dah VEEN-chee, LAY-oh-NAHR'-doe

VITTORIO EMANUELE III. King of Italy.

vee-TOE-ree-oh AY-mahn-WAY'-lay

DE VOLTAIRE, FRANÇOIS. French writer and philosopher.

duh vawl-TAIR, frah(n)-SWAH

WASHINGTON. See page 258.

WATTEAU, JEAN ANTOINE. French painter of the eighteenth century. The "w" of *Watteau* is pronounced "v".

va-TOE, zhah(n) ah(n)-TWA(N)

WEYGAND, MAXIME. French general during World War II. In France, "w" is pronounced "v." The "n" in *Weygand* is nasalized. Do not pronounce the final "d":

vey-GAH(N), mak-SEEM

WODEHOUSE, P. G. English novelist. The first syllable is not *wood*. It rhymes with *toad*:

WOAD-house

VON ZEPPELIN, FERDINAND, Count. Designer of Zeppelin airships.

fun TSEP'-uh-LEEN, FAIR-dee-nahnt

ZUCCA, MANA. American composer-pianist.

ZOO-kah, MAH-nah

VI

NAMES OF OPERAS

Aïda	ah-EE-dah
Ballo in Maschera	BAH-loe een MAHSS-kay-rah
Boris Godounov (or Godunov)	boe-REES GAH-doo-NAWF'
Carmen	kar-MEN (not m'n)
Cavalleria Rusticana	KAH-vah-lay-REE'-ah ROOSS-tee-KAH'-nah
Das Rheingold	dahss RINE-goelt
Der Rosenkavalier	dair ROE'-z'n-KAH-vah-LEER
Die Meistersinger	dee MY'-ster-ZING-ger
Die Walküre	dee vahl-KÛ-ruh (German "ü" is like French "u" in <i>rue</i>)
Die Zauberflöte (German: <i>The Magic Flute</i>)	dee TZOW'-ber-FLU-tuh ("u" as in <i>urn</i>)
Don Giovanni	doen joe-VAHN-nee
Don Pasquale	doen pahss-KWAH-lay
Ernani	air-NAH-nee
Fidelio	fee-DAY-lee-oh
Fra Diavolo	frah DYAH-voe-loe
Götterdämmerung	GUT-er-DEM'-er-öōng ("u" as in <i>urn</i>)
Guglielmo Tell (Italian)	gool-YELL-moe TELL

Guillaume Tell (French)	gee-YOME TELL (The "g" is hard, as in <i>go</i>)
Hänsel und Gretel	HEN-z'l oont GRAY-t'l
Herodiade	ay-rode-YAD
I Pagliacci	ee pahl-YAH-chee
Il Barbiere di Siviglia	eel bahr-BYAIR-ray dee see- VEEL-yah
Il Flauto Magico (Italian)	eel flah-OO-toe MAH-jee-koe
Il Segreto di Susanna	eel seh-GRAY-toe dee soo- ZAHN-nah
Il Trovatore	eel TROE-vah-TOE'-ray
Iris	EE-riss
La Bohème	la baw-EM
La Favorita	lah FAH-voe-REE'-tah
{ L'Africaine (French)	laff-ree-KEN
{ L'Africana (Italian)	LAHF-ree-KAH'-nah
La Flûte Enchantée (French)	lah flüt ah(n)-shah(n)-TAY- uh (French "u" as in <i>rue</i>)
La Forza del Destino	lah FORT-zah dell dess- TEE-noe
Lakmé	lak-MAY
L'Elisir D'Amore	lay-lee-ZEER dah-MOE-ray
Le Nozze di Figaro	lay NOTE-zay dee FEE-gah- roe
Les Huguenots	lay üg-NOE
Lohengrin	LOE-en-grin
Lucia di Lammermoor	loo-CHEE-ah dee lah-mair- MOOR
Lucrezia Borgia	loo-KRAYT-syah BAWR- juh
Manon	ma-NAW(N)
Manon Lescaut	ma-NAW(N) layss-KOE
Marta	MAHR-tah
Mefistofele	may-fee-STOE-fay-lay
Mignon	meen-YAW(N)
Orfeo ed Euridice	awr-FAY-oh aid ay-oo-REE- dee-chay
Rigoletto	REE-goe-LET'-toe
Rinaldo	ree-NAHL-doe

Samson et Dalila	sah(n)-SAW(N) ay dah-lee- LAH
Semiramide	SAY-mee-RAH'-mee-day
Siegfried	ZEE(CH)-freet
Tannhäuser	TAHN-hoy-zer
Thaïs	tah-EESS
Tristan und Isolde	TRISS-tahn öönt ee-ZOLE- duh

VII

FAMOUS COMPOSERS

Arensky, Anton	ah-REN-skee, AHN-tone
Bach, Johann Sebastian	BAH(CH), YOE-hahn zay-BAHSS-tee-AHN'
Beethoven, Ludwig van	BAY-toe-ven, LOOT-vig vahn
Berlioz, Louis Hector	bair-lee-OHSS, loo-EE ek-TAWR
Bizet, Georges	bee-ZAY, zhawrz
Brahms, Johannes	brahmz, yoe-HAH-ness
Chaminade, Cécile	sha-mee-NAD, say-SEEL
Charpentier, Gustave	shar-paw(n)-TYAY, güs- TAV
Chopin, Frédéric	sho-PA(N), fray-day-REEK
Debussy, Claude	duh-bü-SEE, klode (rhymes with <i>mode</i>)
D'Hardelot, Guy	dahr-duh-LOE, gee (hard "g")
Donizetti, Gaetano	DOE-nee-DZET'-tee, GAH-ay-TAH-noe
Dvořák, Anton	DVAWR-shahk, AHN-tone
Flotow, Friedrich von	FLOE-toe, FREET-ri(ch) fun
Franck, César	FRANGK, say-ZAHR
Gluck, Christoph Willibald, von	glöök, KRISS-toaf VILL-i- bahlt, fun
Godowsky, Leopold	goe-DAWF-skee, LAY-oh- poeld

Gounod, Charles	goo-NOE, sharl ("ar" as in <i>arrogant</i>)
Grieg, Edvard	GREG, ED-vahrd
Händel, Georg Friedrich	HEN-d'l, GAY-org (hard "g") FREET-ri(ch)
Haydn, Joseph	HY-d'n, YOE-seff
Humperdinck, Engelbert	HOOM-pair-deengk, AIN-gel-bairt (hard "g")
Lehár, Franz	LAY-hahr, frahnss
Leoncavallo, Ruggiero	LAY-oan-kah-VAHL'loe, rood-JAY-roe
Liszt, Franz	LIST, frahnss
Mascagni, Pietro	mahss-KAHN-yeec, PYAY-troe
Massenet, Jules	mass-NAY, zhül
Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Jakob Ludwig Felix	MEN-d'l-sone bahr-TOLE-dee, YAH-kub LOOT-vi(ch) FAY-leeks
Moussorgsky, Modest	moo-SAWRG-skee, moe-DEST
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	MOTE-zahrt, VOELF-gahngk ah-mah-DAY-uss
Paderewski, Ignaz Jan (See page 194.)	
Paganini, Nicolò	PAH-gah-NEE'-nee, nee-koe-LOE
Ponchielli, Amilcare	pone-KYEL-lee, ah-MEEL-kah-ray
Puccini, Giacomo	poot-CHEE-nee, JAH-koe-moe
Rachmaninov, Sergei	rah(ch)-MAHN-nee-noaf, SAIR-gay
Ravel, Maurice	rav-VEL, moe-REESS
Rimski-Korsakov, Nicolay	RIM-skee-KAWR'-sah-koaf, NEE-koe-ly
Rossini, Gioachino	roe-SEE-nee, joe-ah-KEE-noe
Rubinstein, Anton	ROO-bin-stine, AHN-tone
Saint-Saëns, Charles Camille	sa(n)-SAH(N)SS, sharl ka-MEE-yuh

Schubert, Franz	SHOO-bairt, frahnss
Schumann, Robert	SHOO-mahn, ROE-bairt
Sousa, John Philip (See page 234.)	
Strauss, Richard	SHTROUSS (rhymes with <i>house</i>), REE(ch)-ahrt
Strauss, Johann	SHTROUSS, YOE-hahn
Stravinsky, Igor	stra-VIN-skee, ee-gawr
Tchaikovsky, Petr	chy-KAWF-skee, PEH-truh
Verdi, Giuseppe	VAIR-dee, joo-ZEP-pay
Wagner, Richard	VAHG-ner REE(ch)-ahrt
Weber, Karl Maria von	VAY-ber, kahrl mah-REE-ah fun
Wieniawski, Henryk	VYAY-nyahf-skee, HEN-reek
Wolf, Hugo	VOELF, HOO-goe
Wolf-Ferrari, Ermanno	VOELF-fair-RAH'-ree, air-MAHN-noe

VIII

BOTANICAL NAMES

Abelia	uh-BEE-lee-uh
Abronia	uh-BROE-nee-uh
Acacia	uh-KAY-shuh
Acanthus	uh-KAN-thuss
Acocanthera	AK-oh-KAN'-ther-uh
Aconite	AK-oh-nite
Aconitum	AK-oh-NY'-tum
Adiantum	AD-ee-AN'-tum
Ageratum	uh-JER-uh-tum
Ajuga	ADGE-oo-guh
Algae	AL-jee
Allamanda	AL-uh-MAN'-duh
Allium	AL-ee-um
Alstroemeria	AL-stree-MEE'-ree-uh
Althaea	al-THEE-uh
Alyssum	uh-LISS-um
Amaranthus	AM-uh-RAN'-thuss
Amaryllis	AM-uh-RILL'-iss
Amorpha	uh-MAWR-fuh
Andromeda	an-DRAHM-ee-duh
Anemone	uh-NEM-oh-nee
Angiosperm	AN-jee-oh-sperm
Anthurium	an-THYOO-ree-um
Antirrhinum	AN-tee-RY'-num
Aquilegia	AK-wee-LEE'-jee-uh
Arborvitae	AHR'-ber-VY-tee

Arbutus	ahr-BYOO-tuss
Arctotis	ahrk-TOE-tiss
Asclepias	ass-KLEE-pee-uss
Aspidistra	ASS-pee-DISS'-truh
Atamasco (lily)	AT-uh-MASS'-koe
Azalea	uh-ZAY-lee-uh
Berberis	BER-ber-iss
Bignonia	big-NOE-nee-uh
Bougainvillaea	BOO-g'n-VILL'-ee-uh
Bouvardia	boo-VAHR-dee-uh
Browallia	broe-WAL-lee-uh (-wal- rhymes with <i>pal</i>)
Bryophyta	bry-AHF-ee-tuh
Buddleia	bud-LEE-uh
Caladium	kuh-LAY-dee-um
Calceolaria	KAL-see-oh-LAY'-ree-uh
Calendula	kuh-LEN-dyoo-luh
Calliopsis	KAL-ee-AHP'-siss
Calycanthus	KAL-ee-KAN'-thuss
Camellia	kuh-MELL-ee-uh
Campanula	kam-PAN-yoo-luh
Celosia	see-LOE-shee-uh
Cenizo	say-NEE-soe
Centaurea	SEN-taw-REE'-uh
Cerastium	see-RASS-tee-um
Clarkia	KLAHR-kee-uh
Clematis	KLEM-uh-tiss
Clerodendron	KLEE-roe-DEN'-drun
Colchicum	KAHL-chi-kum (-chi- as in <i>chip</i>)
Coleus	KOE-lee-us
Columbine	KAHL-um-bine
Compositae	kahm-PAHZ-i-tee
Coreopsis	KOE-ree-AHP'-siss
Cucurbita	kyoo-KER-bit-uh
Cuphea	KEW-fee-uh
Cupressus	kew-PRESS-uss

Cyclamen	SIK-luh-men
Cyperus	sy-PEE-russ
Dahlia	DAHL-yuh
Datura	duh-TYOO-ruh
Delphinium	dell-FIN-ee-um
Deutzia	DYOOT-see-uh
Dianthus	dy-AN-thus
Digitalis	DIDGE-i-TAY'-liss
Dracaena	druh-SEE-nuh
Duranta	dyoo-RAN-tuh
Edelweiss	AY-dell-vice
Erodium	ee-ROE-dee-um
Eschscholtzia	e-SHOLT-see-uh (-scholt- rhymes with bolt)
Euphorbia	yoo-FAWR-bee-uh
Feijoa	fay-JOE-uh
Forsythia	fawr-SITH-ee-uh
Freesia	FREE-zhee-uh
Fungi	FUN-jy
Gaillardia	gay-LAHR-dee-uh
Gardenia	gahr-DEE-nee-uh
Gentian	JEN-shun
Gentiana	JEN-shee-AY'-nuh
Gerbera	jer-BEE-ruh
Gilia	JILL-ee-uh
Gladiolus	GLAD-ee-OH'-luss
Godetia	goe-DEE-shee-uh
Guava	GWAH-vuh
Gymnospermae	JIM-noe-SPER'-mee
Gynandria	jin-AN-dree-uh
Gypsophila	jip-SAHF-ee-luh
Hedychium	hee-DIK-ee-um
Helianthus	HEE-lee-AN'-thuss
Helichrysum	HELL-ee-KRY'-sum

Hellebore	HELL-ee-bore
Hemerocallis	HEM-er-oh-KAL'-iss
Hyacinth	HY-uh-sinth
Hydrangea	hy-DRAN-jee-uh
Hypericum	hy-PAIR-ee-kum
Ilex	EYE-leks
Ipomoea	IP-oh-MEE'-uh
Ismene	iss-MEE-nee
Ixia	IK-see-uh
Jacaranda	JAK-uh-RAN'-duh
Juncaceae	jung-KAY-see-ee
Kochia	KOE-kee-uh
Lathyrus	LATH-ee-russ
Leucophyllum	LYOO-koe-FILL'-um
Leucothoë	lyoo-KAHTH-oh-ee
Liatris	ly-AY-triss
Lichen	LY-kin
Ligustrum	lee-GUS-trum
Lilium	LILL-ee-um
Linaria	ly-NAY-ree-uh
Linum	LY-num
Lobelia	loe-BEE-lee-uh
Lunaria	lyoo-NAY-ree-uh
Mignonette	min-yun-ETT
Mimosa	mim-OH-suh
Montbretia	mahnt-BREE-tee-uh
Nandina	nan-DY-nuh
Nasturtium	nuh-STER-shum
Nerine	nee-RY-nee
Nigella	ny-JELL-uh
Nymphaea	nim-FEE-uh
Oenothera	EE-noe-THEE'-ruh
Orchid	AWR-kid

Ornithogalum	AWR-ni-THUG'-uh-lum
Oxalis	AHK-suh-liss
Papaya	pah-PAH-yah
Parkinsonia	PAHR-kin-SOE'-nee-uh
Pelargonium	PELL-ahr-GOE'-nee-um
Pentstemon	pent-STEE-mun
Peony	PEE-oh-nee
Petunia	pee-TYOO-nee-uh
Philodendron	FILL-oh-DEN'-drum
Physalis	FY-suh-liss
Plantago	plan-TAY-goe
Platycodon	PLAT-ee-KOE'-dun
Plumbago	plum-BAY-goe
Poinciana	POIN-see-AY'-nuh
Poinsettia	poin-SET-ee-uh
Polianthes	PAHL-ee-AN'-theez
Portulaca	PORE-tyoo-LAY'-kuh
Primula	PRIM-yoo-luh
Protophyta	proe-TAHF-ee-tuh
Pteridophyta	TAIR-ee-DAHF'-ee-tuh
Pyracantha	PY-ruh-KAN'-thuh
Quercus	KWER-kuss
Quisqualis	kwis-KWAY-liss
Rafflesia	raf-FLEE-zhee-uh
Ranunculus	ruh-NUNG-kyoo-luss
Rhinanthus	ry-NAN-thuss
Rhodanthe	roe-DAN-thee
Rhododendron	ROE-doe-DEN'-drum
Riccia	RIK-see-uh
Richardsonia	RICH-erd-SOE'-nee-uh
Rosaceae	roe-ZAY-see-uh
Salpiglossis	SAL-pee-GLAHSS'-iss
Sansevieria	SAN-see-vee-EE'-ree-uh
Sapium	SAY-pee-um
Sassafras	SASS'-uh-FRASS

Saxifrage	SAK-suh-fridge
Scabiosa	SKAY-bee-OH'-suh
Schizanthus	sky-ZAN-thuss
Scilla	SILL-uh
Scrophularia	SKRAHF-yoo-LAY'-ree-uh
Sedum	SEE-dum
Senecio	see-NEE-shee-oh
Solanum	soe-LAY-num
Sparaxis	spuh-RAK-siss
Sphagnum	SFAG-num
Spiraea	spy-REE-uh
Statice	STAT-ee-see
Stephanotis	STEF-uh-NOE'-tiss
Stokesia	stoe-KEE-zhee-uh
Strelitzia	stree-LIT-see-uh
Streptocarpus	STREP-toe-KAHR'-puss
Syringa	see-RING-guh
Sumac	SHOO-mak
Thunbergia	thun-BER-jee-uh
Tigridia	ty-GRID-ee-uh
Torenia	toe-REE-nee-uh
Trillium	TRILL-ee-um
Tritonia	try-TOE-nee-uh
Tropaeolum	troe-PEE-oh-lum
Ulmus	ULL-muss
Verbena	ver-BEE-nuh
Vervain	VER-vain
Viburnum	vy-BER-num
Vinca	VING-kuh
Viscaria	viss-KAY-ree-uh
Watsonia	waht-SOE-nee-uh
Weigela	wy-GEE-luh
Wistaria	wis-TAY-ree-uh
Xylopia	zy-LOE-pee-uh

Yaupon**YAW-pun****Yucca****YUK-uh****Zephyranthes****ZEF-ee-RAN'-theez****Zinnia****ZIN-ee-uh****Zostera****zahss-TEE-ruh**

IX

THE PROPER CHOICE OF WORDS

HERE, IN A SINGLE WORD, is the secret of good writing: *clearness*. Two thousand years ago, Quintilian, Roman rhetorician and critic, put it thus: "The writer should so write that his readers not only may, but must, understand."

Yes, it is as simple as that.

Of course, the writer must have something to write about. But what he has to say should be told in accurate, concise, and *simple* language.

Trying to write *elegantly* is the cause of almost all bad writing. Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great lexicographer, quoted with approval the advice given by a dour old tutor: "Read over your compositions, and, whenever you meet with a passage you think is particularly fine, strike it out!"

He was a wise man. And it is still true that *elegant* writing is the stamp of the immature, the inexperienced, the inept. It is to be found especially in the literary outpourings of high-school journalists, fledgling novelists, cub reporters, society editors, and lady poets.

But seasoned writers, too, are often guilty of dazzling and confusing *elegance*. I shall quote a few examples culled from recent readings (the italics are mine):

From the column of a syndicated question-and-answer man: "Cigar bands were first used in colonial days to protect the fingers of aristocratic women *who smoked them from stains*." Is it possible to smoke anything from stains? And what was it that aristocratic women used to smoke: cigar bands or their fingers?

An American dictionary describes pantaloons as: "*A tight-fitting man's garment.*"

An undertaking firm declares in a large advertisement: "We are happy if we have contributed toward making this city a better place *in which to live.*"

The foreign correspondent of an international news service startles the world with the announcement that: "Today the Italians tightened their belts by *cutting off their fats.*"

From a best-seller of the 1920's: ". . . drivers walking along beside the *mules wearing red fezzes.*"

In the rotogravure section of a metropolitan daily, a girl dancer was pictured leaping with widespread legs into the air. The caption read: "Girl dancer with *legs akimbo.*" (*Akimbo.* "With the hand on the hip and the elbow turned outward."—*Webster's New International.*)

From a St. Louis newspaper: "Since 1922, more than twenty assassins have tried to kill Mussolini with bombs and guns *including three women.*"

A Los Angeles reporter would have us believe that: "The sudden death of the man was declared to be the result of a *suicide attempt by Coroner W—.*"

This charming imagery was found in a current magazine: "There were the herbs, so dear to the hearts of the *old ladies suspended from the ceiling.*"

From an American novel: "She walked out into the dawn *as the sun rose and wandered on small bare feet through the meadow.*" And how, may I ask, does one walk out *into* something?

Many absurdities heard on the air are slips, not of the tongue, but of the pen. This lovely howler was prepared, I am sure, by some advertising-agency genius, and not by the unfortunate announcer who broadcast it: "Send a box top for these reproductions of exquisite paintings *by famous artists in every color of the rainbow.*"

Bad writing? The air is murky with it. Hark to a woman cooking expert informing her eager listeners from Maine to California: "The housewife of today *puts food on the table with her best foot forward.*" I, for one, should enjoy seeing so neat a trick of culinary acrobatics.

Many writers, it seems, go out of their way to avoid clarity of expression.

Most elegant writing is laden with clichés, the mummies of words and expressions, once vital and vigorous, that have died of exhaustion. (*Cliché* is a word from the French. It means "a trite, wornout word or phrase." It is pronounced: klee-SHAY.)

Clichés are especially prevalent in the vocabulary of the American executive. His business letters have a sepulchral odor. *With reference to, and contents noted; the writer wishes to state, with regards to same; will you please be advised; as per our communication of recent date; as respects same, will say; thanking you kindly in advance*—are but a few of the ancient cadavers whose moldering bones yearn for the sanctuary of the tomb.

Sales manager John J. Jones is a brilliant dynamo of a man, as up-to-the-minute as today's newspaper—until he rings for his secretary. He then sets his mind back a hundred years and dictates: "This is to acknowledge receipt of your communication of the thirteenth inst. and contents noted."

Advertising parlance, too, is dank and grisly: *de luxe; price, quality, and service; super; smart; stylish; chic; reconditioned; easy budget payments; our name on your plumbing fixtures is like sterling on silver.*

Listen to the radio for a while: The word *free* must always be preceded by *absolutely*, as if there were more than one degree of freeness. No breakfast food was ever marketed that wasn't *crispy, crunchy*. All coffees are celebrated for *rich, full-bodied flavor*. Bread invariably is *oven-fresh* and makes toast that is the acme of *golden-brown goodness*.

Preparations more numerous than the sands guarantee to give one *soft, lovely hands*, to make one's skin *adorably smooth and youthful*, to remove *ugly, dingy stains* from the teeth and make them *sparkling and gleaming white*. There is no soap on American grocery shelves that does not produce *rich, creamy lather* or *soothing, cleansing suds* that will protect you against *rough, reddened, dishwater hands*.

But the executive and the advertising writer are not the

only offenders. Most of us are apt to follow the line of least resistance, to wait for the psychological moment, and to make every effort to make our town a better place in which to live.

These, and countless others, should be laid away in decent burial: *sigh of relief; beat a hasty retreat; untiring efforts; a bolt from the blue; her slim young body; downy couch; arms of Morpheus; dull, sickening thud; long-felt want; checkered career; long-suffering; the proud possessor; breathless suspense; at long last.*

In our speech and writing, we must dare to be simple, direct, clear. We should prefer the familiar word to the unfamiliar: *secretary to amanuensis; prison to penal institution; dancer to devotee of Terpsichore.* We should prefer the concrete word to the abstract: *man to individual; writer to literary personality; store to commercial emporium.* We should prefer the single word to the circumlocution: *Congress to governmental legislative assemblage; Catholic to of the Catholic persuasion; banker to official of a financial concern.* We should prefer the short word to the long: *food to comestibles; house to residence; salary to remuneration.* We should prefer the Anglo-Saxon word to the Romance: *meal to repast; speak to articulate; door to entrance; work to employment.* We should prefer the candid word to the euphemism: *leg to limb; undertaker to mortician; kiss to osculation; spit to expectorate.*

My prose at best is halting, and I am sure that this book contains many a passage that may be pointed to as a horrible example. But in the writing of this book, I have tried to be guided by an ideal that is expressed in the words of Anatole France: "*D'abord la clarté; puis encore la clarté; et enfin la clarté.*" "First, clearness; next, clearness; and finally, clearness."

Clearness in writing and speech depends on good *diction*, to use the word in the correct sense of "the proper choice of words to express ideas simply and accurately."

Many prevalent errors are pointed out and corrected in the pages that follow. But this section is not to be thought of as a grammar. No! It is a simple, nontechnical guide to good usage based on the preponderance of American authority. It

is designed to aid the reader of average education, who, there is good reason to believe, regards the subject of grammar with genuine dismay; who, when school days finally ended, thought to dismiss the subject forever with a fervent: "Thank heaven, that's the end of grammar for me!"

This section, then, will not dare to mention, nor even hint at, the hated scholastic mumbo jumbos of grammatical, rhetorical, and syntactical rules. Instead, by the use of *wrong* and *right* examples, and logical, common-sense explanations, we shall accomplish our purpose quickly and easily.

The grammarians had their day with us once. What we now desire is a little practical information without the groans of our despairing student days.

AFFECT

EFFECT

These vexatious words are the despair of most of us. They are so alike, yet so unlike, that, to quote a stenographer of my acquaintance: "The harder I try to unscramble them, the more confused I become."

She confesses frankly to this ingenious expedient: whenever either word presents itself in her dictation, she types it by beginning the word with an "a" struck on top of an "e," so that the word may be *affect* or *effect*, thus: "*affect*."

Let us see if there isn't a simpler and tidier way out of the difficulty. We shall begin by finding out what the words mean:

Effect may be either verb or noun.

The verb *effect* means: To accomplish; to bring about; to cause to come to pass.

The noun *effect* means: A result; a consequence; that which is produced by a cause.

Affect is a verb only. It means:

- (a) To act on; to impress; to move or touch emotionally.
- (b) To pretend; to assume something that is artificial or unnatural; to adopt a pose.
- (c) To be fond of; to like; to thrive in or on.

But we need to do more than merely define the words. We need to invent a simple device or key that will unfailingly tell us which word to use in any possible sentence. I have there-

fore contrived a five-word key that should solve the problem once and for all. The five words are the essence of the above-listed definitions. They are:

- Effect:* (1) *accomplish* ("to bring about")
 (2) *result* ("the thing brought about")
 (3) *move* ("to act on," "to touch emotionally")
Affect: (4) *assume* ("to pretend," "to be artificial")
 (5) *like* ("to enjoy," "to thrive in or on")

Now let us try our key words on a few sentences:

"How did the good news —— you?" *Accomplish* you? *Result* you? No. *Move* you? Yes; that is essentially what we wished to say. Therefore: "How did the good news *affect* you?"

"We ——ed his prompt release." *Moved* his release? *Assumed* his release? *Liked* his release? No; we *accomplished* it. Therefore: "We *effected* his prompt release."

"What —— will the war have on my business?" What *move*? What *assume*? What *like*? No. What *result*? Yes. Therefore: "What *effect* will the war have on my business."

"She ——s a girlish manner, but she is past forty." She *accomplishes*? She *results*? No. She *assumes* or *pretends*. Therefore: "She *affects* a girlish manner."

"He ——s cowboy boots." He *accomplishes*? He *results*? No; he *likes* to wear the boots. Therefore: "He *affects* cowboy boots."

Yes, it is as simple as that. And now, to test the effectiveness of the key, use the five words to check the correctness of the words in these sentences:

He has an *affected* (4) manner.

War always *affects* (3) business.

The medicine is *effecting* (1) a rapid cure.

His speech had a good *effect* (2) on his audience.

Orchids *affect* (5) a tropical climate.

The sight of blood *affects* (3) me unpleasantly.

What does he hope to *effect* (1) by the change?

He *affects* (5) red neckties.

What was the *effect* (2) of the drug?

His *affected* (4) speech irritates me.

Now we see that the reader has but to memorize this easy formula in order to master *affect-effect* for all time to come:

Affect: to move; to assume; to like.

Effect: to accomplish; a result.

Important: Your clothes and other personal belongings are your *effects*. A law, ordinance, or rule goes into *effect*.

AFTER HAVING

"*After having written* the letter, he mailed it special delivery."

No. *After having* is redundant. Say: "*Having written* the letter" or "*After writing* the letter."

AGGRAVATE, VERB. *To make heavier; to increase; to intensify.*

"The noise *aggravates* me."

No. *Aggravate* does not mean "to irritate," "to exasperate," "to worry." The word means "to increase," "to make severer." Better say: "The noise *irritates* me."

Wrong: "I am completely *aggravated*."

Right: "I am very much *exasperated*."

Wrong: "Her manner is quite *aggravating*."

Right: "Her manner is quite *annoying*."

Wrong: "Your insolence will only result in my *aggravation*."

Right: "Your insolence will result only in my *disapproval*."

How to use *aggravate* correctly:

The noise *aggravates* ("increases") my nervousness. Her disobedience has *aggravated* ("added to") my exasperation. He has *aggravated* ("intensified") his illness by failing to obey the doctor's orders. This bad news will result in the *aggravation* ("increase") of his grief.

Note: An *aggravated assault* is not one that is in retaliation for a wrong or injury; nor is it the result of being taunted or challenged. An *aggravated assault* is one that is more serious than a simple assault.

AIRDROME, NOUN. *An airport.*

Question: All my life I've said *airdome*. In the papers, I notice the spelling *airdrome*. Have I been wrong all these years?

Answer: There is no such word as *airdome*. The correct *-drome* is from the Greek suffix *-dromos*, meaning "a running course," as *hippodrome*.

AKIMBO

Question: A rotogravure picture showing a girl "jitterbug" leaping into the air with legs widespread was captioned "Girl dancer with legs *akimbo*." Right?

Answer: It is a good trick even if it cannot be done. *Akimbo* (pronounced: uh-KIM-boe) means "with the hand on the hip and the elbow turned outward."

Note: It is redundant to say: "She posed with arms *akimbo*." Improved: "She posed *akimbo*."

ALL RIGHT

Question: Which is correct, *allright* or *alright*?

Answer: Neither. *All right* (two words) is the correct form, but it must be noted that the expression is a colloquialism permissible only in informal speech.

AND

BUT

It is said that it is wicked to begin a sentence with *and* or *but*. How this queer superstition started I have no idea.

From the time of Shakespeare and Milton to the present day, sentences beginning with *and* and *but* are to be found in profusion in our best literature. At random I open my Bible; in the ninth chapter of Acts, twenty-four verses begin with *and*; eight begin with *but*.

AN HISTORICAL

Some grammars hold that *an* should be used before words beginning with "h" that are accented on the second syllable, as: *an historian, an historical, an heroic*.

It is the custom in England to say: *an hotel, an hospital, an humble man*, etc.

In view of the well-established rule: "Use *a* before words beginning with a consonant sound; use *an* before words beginning with a vowel sound," the use of *an* before *historian*, *historical*, and *heroic* appears to be nothing more than an attempt to make euphonious the British dropping of the initial "h," as: *an 'istorian*, *an 'istorical*, *an 'eroic*.

Since no dictionary lists such words as *historian*, *historical*, *heroic*, *hotel*, *hospital*, and *humble* with the "h" silent, or even semisilent, there seems to be no sense in voiding a rule that has long prevailed in English.

Not: "It was *an historic* event." It is better usage to say: "It was *a historic* event."

Not: "He is *an habitual* smoker." Better say: "He is *a habitual* smoker."

Not: "We stayed at *an hotel*," but: "We stayed at *a hotel*."

Not: "He is *an humble* man." Better say: "He is *a humble* (sound the "h") man."

Not "They presented *an united* front." *United* does begin with the vowel "u," but it has the sound of the consonant "y": yoo-nited. Therefore, say: "They presented *a united* front."

Not: "I consider it *a honor*." In *honor*, the "h" is not pronounced; the word, therefore, begins with a vowel sound: AH-ner. Say: "I consider it *an honor*." The same holds for *heir*, *honest*, and *hour*.

AREN'T I AND AIN'T

Question: I have been rebuked for saying: *am I not?* Several friends, college graduates, insist that I say: *Aren't I?* Which is correct?—Foreign-born.

Answer: There are many who naïvely cleave to *aren't I?* But when they are reminded that it is a contraction of *are not I?* they at once see that the expression is not only a malapropism of the finest water but is grammatically indefensible as well. Even an illiterate would not be guilty of: "*I are going, are not I?*"

Are used with the personal pronoun *I* is as unpardonable as *he am*, *she are*, *I is*.

The ungrammatical *aren't I?* worked its way into common use through error. At one time *a'n't I?* (pronounced: ahnt I) was popular as the contraction of *am not I?* In time, *a'n't* became corrupted to *ain't*; and when this was generally stigmatized as a vulgarism, the unlovely *aren't I?* came forth to astound and confound us.

Continue to say *am I not?* Foreign-born, and refer your critics to any English grammar.

As to *ain't*, once used freely among the educated, the contraction is listed as "dialectal" or "illiterate" by the dictionaries. But, it must be noted, the use of *ain't* is not always a sign of illiteracy, for the expression is common in the speech of many persons of good education.

But it is doubtful if *ain't* will ever be regarded by language authorities as anything but a vulgarism, one that has no place in cultured usage.

AROUND ABOUT

"It cost *around* fifty dollars."

No. *Around* means "encircling," "surrounding." Better say: "It cost *about* fifty dollars."

Wrong: "I am *about* frozen."

Right: "I am *almost* frozen."

Wrong: "We were sitting *around* the room." No, not unless we were occupying a continuous circle of chairs encompassing the room.

Right: "We were sitting *about* ('here and there') the room."

Wrong: "He looked *around* him." No. How could he look *around* himself?

Right: "He looked *about* him."

Wrong: "He looked *around* and waved good-by."

Right: "He looked *back* and waved good-by."

Wrong: "Come tomorrow *around* six o'clock."

Right: "Come tomorrow *about* six o'clock."

Wrong: "We traveled by *around about* route."

Right: "We traveled a *roundabout* route."

Note: The examples designated as wrong are colloquialisms and should not be used in serious speech or writing.

AVERT

AVOID

Question: Will you please explain any difference in the meaning of *avert* and *avoid*?

Answer: *Avoid* means "to shun," "to keep away from." *Avert* is "to ward off," "to prevent." Thus, you may *avert* an accident if you *avoid* careless driving.

AWFUL

"I had an *awful* good time."

No. *Awful* does not mean "very," "exceedingly," "rather." It means "filled with awe," "dreadful," "appalling." Better say: "I had a *very* good time."

Wrong: "I'm *awfully* glad." How can one be happy and filled with dread simultaneously? Shun this slangy use of *awful*. Say: "I am glad (*happy* or *delighted*)."

Wrong: "She's *awful* pretty." No girl ever was so pretty as to be awful. She might inspire admiration, but never awe.

Right: "She is *very* (*exceedingly* or *quite*) pretty."

Wrong: "They are *awfully* poor." No. Poverty inspires pity, not awe.

Right: "They are *pitiably* (*miserably* or *desperately*) poor."

Wrong: "It was the *awfullest* meal I ever ate." A bad meal may be disgusting, unappetizing, revolting, but never to the point that one is filled with awe about it.

Right: "It was the *worst* (*most tasteless*; *poorest*) meal I have ever eaten."

How to use *awful* correctly: "The *awful* height frightened him." "They were appalled at the *awfulness* of the tragedy." "That he must die was an *awful* thought." "The lion roared *awfully*."

BAD**BADLY**

"I feel *badly* today."

No. Would one say: "I feel *goodly*; I feel *faintly*; I feel *welly*?" Certainly not. The feeling that I have is the opposite of a *good* feeling. Therefore: "I feel *bad* today."

Wrong: "She feels *badly* about the mistake." No. She does not *feel* badly unless her sense of touch is defective or wholly impaired. The mistake gives her a *bad feeling*.

Right: "She feels *bad* about the mistake."

Wrong: "Doesn't she look *badly*?" Is she nearsighted? Does she have astigmatism? Is she losing her sight? No. We are not concerned with her eyesight, but about her appearance.

Right: "Doesn't she look *bad*?"

Important: Do not use *badly* in connection with emotion or appearance. One may drive, write, sing, dance, speak, or skate *badly*; but when one is ill or is sorry about something, or shows the ravages of illness or sorrow, the only correct form to use is *bad*.

BALANCE

"I sleep eight hours and work eight hours; the *balance* of my time is wasted."

No. Leave the word *balance* to the bookkeepers. Say: ". . . the *remainder* (or *rest*) of my time is wasted."

BIYEARLY

Question: If *biweekly* means "every two weeks," and if *bimonthly* means "every two months," why does *biyearly* mean "twice a year"? I don't understand it.

Answer: No more do I. *Biannual* also means "occurring twice a year," but *biennial* means "once every two years"! Beautifully simple, isn't it? Or is it?

BOTH ALIKE

Question: What is wrong with this sentence: "They are *both alike*?"

Answer: It has one word too many. It is equivalent to saying: "John and Henry are like John and Henry." Since one cannot be like oneself, it is sufficient to say: "They are *alike*."

BURST**BUST**

"He died of a *burst*ed appendix."

No. The past tense of *burst* is not formed by adding *-ed*. It is simply *burst*. Better say: "He died of a *burst* (or *ruptured*) appendix."

Wrong: "I *busted* my watch."

Right: "I *broke* (or *damaged*) my watch."

Wrong: "You will *bust* your glasses."

Right: "You will *break* your glasses."

Wrong: "I had to *bust* out laughing."

Right: "I had to *burst* out laughing."

Note: There are no such words as *burst*ed and *busted*. The word *bust* means "the human body from the head to the waist" or "a sculpture of the head and shoulders."

Avoid as vulgarisms uses of *bust* that have no place in correct speech, such as: "This hand is a *bust*." "*Bust* him on the nose." "He *busted* out of school." "I'm flat *busted*." "Let's *bust* up the game." "He went on a big *bust*."

CAN**MAY**

"*Can* I come in?"

No. What you are asking for is permission to enter. *Can* expresses "ability to do something"; *may* denotes "permission or sanction." Better say: "*May* I come in?"

Wrong: "I *might can* go tomorrow."

Right: "I *may be able* to go tomorrow."

Wrong: "Can I do something for you?" Of course, you *can*. The question is, will you be *permitted* to do something.

Right: "*May* I do something for you?"

CAPACITY

Question: Is it correct to say: "He has great *capacity* as a teacher"?

Answer: No. *Capacity* is "the power to receive and retain," as the *capacity* of a bucket. The better word is *ability*: "He has a great *capacity* for learning and splendid *ability* (or *aptitude*) for teaching."

CAPITAL**CAPITOL**

Question: Will you please distinguish between these words?

Answer: *Capital* may be a noun, as "the *capital* of a corporation," "the *capital* (city) of Texas"; or an adjective, as: "*capital* punishment," "a *capital* letter," "a *capital* idea."

Capitol is a noun only, and designates a temple or building, as: "Congress meets in the *Capitol* at Washington."

Do not use *capitol* in the meaning of a capital city, as: "Washington is the *capitol* of the United States." Correct: "Washington is the *capital* of the United States, and in that city the *Capitol* is located."

CATTLE

Question: Does *cattle* mean "cows" only?

Answer: *Cattle* (from *chattel*) originally meant "goods," "property." The word is now commonly used to mean "cows, bulls, and steers," but it is also frequently applied to domestic animals collectively, as: sheep, goats, horses, mules, and swine.

CHARACTER**REPUTATION**

Generally speaking, *character* refers to one's moral excellence. *Reputation* refers to the esteem or lack of esteem in which one is held by one's fellows. It is possible for a person of high *character* to have a bad *reputation*, and vice versa.

(See NOTORIOUS, page 348.)

CHINESE

Question: Is a native of China properly a *Chinaman*?

Answer: The term *Chinaman* is not good usage. A native of China is a *Chinese*.

CLIMB DOWN

Question: Is *climb down* correct usage?

Answer: *Climb down* is common in colloquial speech, but I should not recommend the expression, since the true meaning of *climb* is "to ascend," "to pull oneself up."

COLESLAW

Question: Is it *coleslaw* or *coldslaw*?

Answer: The correct *coleslaw* is from the Dutch *kool sla*, meaning "a cabbage salad." The word *slaw* now has the same meaning as *coleslaw*.

COLLECTIVE NOUNS, GRAMMAR. *Nouns naming an aggregate or collection of individuals of the same kind.*

A leading columnist confessed in print that he was nonplused by a reader's query: "People always say *a herd of cattle* and *a flock of sheep*, but what is the right word for *a flock of pigs*?"

Strictly speaking, pigs are the young of hogs and come in litters. One should say *a herd of hogs* or *swine*.

Other similar collective nouns are:

bevy of birds (especially of quail)

brood of birds (especially of grouse)

building of rooks (obsolete)

bunch of cattle

cast of hawks or falcons

covey of birds (especially of partridges)

drove of animals (especially of cattle, oxen, sheep, or swine)

flight of birds (especially of doves)

flock of birds or animals (especially of geese, chickens, and sheep)

gang of elk

herd of large animals (especially of horses, oxen, camels, elephants, cattle, deer, whales, sheep, swine, or seals)

muster of peacocks (obsolete)

pack of hounds or wild animals (such as wolves, lions, jackals)

plump of wildfowl (obsolete)

pod of seals or whales

pride of lions (obsolete)
ride of pheasants (obsolete)
school of fishes or whales
shoal of fishes
skulk of foxes (obsolete)
sleuth of bears (obsolete)
stand of plovers (obsolete)
swarm of insects (especially of bees)
troop of monkeys
watch of nightingales (obsolete)
wisp of snipe.

COLLOQUIALISM

Question: You often mention a pronunciation as a *colloquialism*. Please explain.

Answer: A *colloquialism* is an expression, word, or pronunciation that is acceptable in informal, intimate conversation, but is not permissible in formal discourse or in serious writing.

COMPLETED

Question: Is it correct to say: "She is *dark-completed*"?

Answer: No. *Completed* means "interwoven." The correct word is *complexioned*.

Say: "She is *dark-complexioned*"; or better still: "She has a *dark complexion*."

CONTINUAL

CONTINUOUS

Question: Are these words interchangeable?

Answer: Yes, within certain limits. *Continuous* refers to both time and space; *continual* refers only to time.

CONTRAPTION

Question: Is *contraption* a good word to use?

Answer: *Contraption* is a purely fictitious word. It is a dialectal and illiterate corruption of the word *contrivance*. Do not use it.

**CONVENE
CONVOKE**

Convene (from the Latin *con-* plus *venire*) means "to come," "to assemble."

Convoke (from the Latin *con-* plus *vocare*) means "to call," "to summon."

Convene is frequently misused for *convoke*. Indeed, the Constitution of the United States, Section 3, Article 2, states that the President "may *convene* and adjourn Congress."

**COUPLE
PAIR**

"I'll be ready in *a couple* of minutes."

No. *A couple* consists of two similar things joined together. Better say: "I'll be ready in *a few* minutes."

Wrong: "I can see *a couple* of stars." Stars do not come in pairs, and they are never coupled together.

Right: "I can see *two or three (a few or several)* stars."

Avoid: "*A couple* of friends of mine." Strictly speaking, your two friends are not a couple unless they are joined together by marriage. Better say: "*Two* friends of mine."

Wrong: "The happy *couple* are leaving." Although couple means "two," the word is regarded as singular.

Right: "The happy *couple* is leaving."

Wrong: "I bought a *new pair* of shoes." No. The shoes are new, not the pair. *Right*: "I bought *a pair* of new shoes."

Wrong: "I have two *pair* of shoes."

Right: "I have two *pairs* of shoes."

Wrong: "This *pair* are mine." *Pair*, like *couple*, is regarded as a singular word.

Right: "This *pair* is mine."

COUSINSHIP

Question: What is the relationship expressed by *first cousin once removed*?

Answer: These are the degrees of *cousinship*:

The child of your uncle or aunt is your *first cousin*.

Your first cousin's child is your *first cousin once removed*.

Your child and your cousin's child are *second cousins*.

Your second cousin's child is your *second cousin once removed*.

Your child and your second cousin's child are *third cousins*.

And so on back to Adam.

CREOLE

Caution: Do not speak of persons with any degree of Negro blood as *Creoles*.

Real Creoles, according to *Webster's*, are: "White persons descended from the French or Spanish settlers of Louisiana and of the Gulf States"; or, according to the French definition, a Creole is: "*Personne de pure race blanche, née aux colonies*," "person of pure white race, born in the colonies."

Indeed, many of the stateliest aristocratic families of the South have fierce pride in their Creole ancestry. Use of the word as implying a person of Negro blood is entirely erroneous.

(See MULATTO, page 182.)

CUTE

Question: I've always heard that *cute* means "bowlegged." Right?

Answer: Wrong. *Cute*, a contraction of *acute*, has no connection with anatomical faults whatever. In America, this colloquial word means "cunning," "pleasing," "attractive," as: "a cute child"; "a cute puppy"; "a cute hat."

DATE

Question: Is it good English to say: "I have a *date*" or "John is my *date*"?

Answer: *Date*, in the meaning of "engagement," is a colloquialism. *Date*, in the meaning of "escort," is slang. However, use of the word in these meanings is so firmly rooted in the American vocabulary that dictionary sanction seems inevitable. I cannot imagine the little-girl-next-door, already

dating for parties, as ever saying: "I have an *engagement* this evening; Junior Smith will be my *escort*."

DECIMATED

Question: Will you please discuss the use by war correspondents of the word *decimated*?

Answer: The word is commonly misused in the meaning of "wiped out," as: "The entire regiment was decimated." Properly, to *decimate* means "to kill one out of ten," which, in modern warfare, is a rather light loss.

DEPENDABILITY

Question: Please settle an argument. Am I right in holding that the word *dependability* is not proper?

Answer: Authorities of an earlier day shuddered at the mere mention of *dependability*. "Away with the vile American vulgarism," they cried. "The only correct word is *dependableness*!"

But modern dictionaries are less chaste. They admit *dependability* as a useful and respectable word that has lived down its irregular origin.

DISGRUNTLE

Question: Is *disgruntle* a good word to use?

Answer: It is a very bad word to use. It is a malformation that is dialectal and utterly meaningless. *Gruntle*, an obsolete word, means "to grunt," "to grumble," "to complain." The prefix *dis-* denotes "the reversal of an action," as in *disagree*, *disown*. How, then, can it be said that "a person is *disgruntled*"?

DISREGARDLESS

IRREGARDLESS

Question: Is it correct to say *disregardless* and *irregardless*?

Answer: No. These forms are dialectal. They are double negatives, since the prefixes *dis-* and *ir-* and the suffix *-less* mean the same thing. They are, like *in-* and *un-*, forms of negation. The correct adverb is *regardless*.

DON'T, VERB. *Contraction for "do not."*

"He *don't* understand me."

No. As *don't* is a shortened form of *do not*, it is plain that "*he don't* (or *do not*)" may never be correctly used.

Wrong: "She *don't* care for him."

Right: "She *doesn't* (or *does not*) care for him."

Wrong: "It *don't* matter."

Right: "It *doesn't* (or *does not*) matter."

DOVE

"He *dove* into the water."

No. The correct past tense of *dive* is *dived*. Say: "He *dived* into the water."

Dove is a common error. It is even found in Longfellow's beautiful poem "Hiawatha":

Straight into the river Kwasind
Plunged as if he were an otter,
Dove as if he were a beaver.

DRAGGED

"The river was *drug* for the body."

No. The past tense of *drag* is never *drug*, but *dragged*. Better say: "The river was *dragged* for the body."

Wrong: "He *drug* the sled up the hill."

Right: "He *dragged* the sled up the hill."

Wrong: "The lecture *drug* to a close."

Right: "The lecture *dragged* to a close."

Wrong: "The ship *drug* her anchor."

Right: "The ship *dragged* her anchor."

DRAPES

Question: Is it correct to speak of window curtains as *drapes*?

Answer: *Drapes* is regarded as a colloquialism bordering on slang. But the word is so firmly fixed in the American vocabulary that the dictionaries may soon have to admit it to the

ranks of legitimate words. In the meantime, *draperies* is much the better word.

DRUNK, *Past participle of the verb "to drink."*

"I have drank the water."

No. *I have drank* is as gross an error as *I have went*; *I have saw*; *I have took*. One should say: "*I have drunk the water.*"

Wrong: "I drunk the water."

Right: "I drank the water."

Wrong: "The wine was drank before dinner."

Right: "The wine was drunk before dinner."

Wrong: "The drunk driver drunk the whiskey."

Right: "The drunken driver drank the whiskey."

Hint for radio "script" writers: Never use the contraction *I'd* in such constructions as: *I'd taken*, *I'd drunk*, *I'd driven*. When spoken on the radio, these are indistinguishable from the grammatical errors: *I taken*, *I drunk*, *I driven*.

EACH OTHER

ONE ANOTHER

Use *each other* in referring to two only, as: "John and Mary loved *each other*."

Use *one another* in referring to more than two, as: "John, Mary, Fred, and Susan danced with *one another*."

EATABLE or EDIBLE

Question: Is food eatable or edible?

Answer: Either is correct, though edible is the better choice.

EITHER

Question: Is either correctly used to mean "both" in this passage from a book: "For centuries, the city had sprawled on either side of the river"?

Answer: Either, to mean "both," has dictionary support, but such usage is confusing to most of us who think of either as "one or the other," "one of two."

The thought, therefore, of a fitful city tossing through the

ages from one river bank to the other and back again invites a mental picture that is pretty dreadful.

If we say the city had sprawled on *each* side or on *both* sides of the river, no one will misunderstand us.

Question: What is the rule for *or* and *nor* with *either*?

Answer: *Either-or, neither-nor*, is the rule: "You may have *either* one *or* the other." "You may have *neither* this *nor* that."

-EIVE or -IEVE

In a newspaper release, I gave a memory verse for spelling words ending in *-eive* and *-ieve*:

After "c" always apply
The letter "e" before the "i";
After other letters, "i"
Before the "e" must always lie.

Several readers submitted, as a better and simpler verse the old grade-school classic:

"I" before "e,"
Except after "c,"
Unless sounded like "a"
As in *neighbor* or *weigh*.

One reader made the rather startling suggestion: "After 'I' use 'i'; after 'c' use 'e.' Just get *l-i-c-e* in your head, and you'll be O.K."

The verses given here are meant to apply only to words ending in *-eive* and *-ieve*. There is no rule by which we can be guided in the spelling of such words as: *lien*, *rein*, *fierce*, *feint*, *mien*, *weird*.

What to do? Look up each individual word in a reliable dictionary.

EQUALLY

"Equally as good."

No. The *as* is superfluous. Say: "*Equally* good"; "*equally* beneficial"; "*equally* satisfactory."

EVACUATED

Question: Is it correct to say: "The citizens were *evacuated* from the town?"

Answer: *Evacuate* means "to empty," "to vacate." In best usage, the sentence should read: "The town *was evacuated* of its citizens."

EVERY NOW AND THEN

"I go fishing *every now and then*."

No; absurd. Since *now and then* means "occasionally," how could one "go fishing *every occasionally*"? Better say: "I go fishing *now and then* (or *occasionally*)."

"We hear from him *every so often*."

More nonsense. *Often* means "frequently." "*Every frequently*"? No. Better say: "We hear from him *often* (*frequently* or *regularly*)."

"We see her *every once in awhile*."

Worse and worse. *Once in awhile* means "occasionally," therefore *every occasionally* obviously is pure twaddle. Better say: "We see her *once in awhile* (or *occasionally*)."

EVERYONE—EVERYBODY**ANYONE—ANYBODY**

"If *anyone* wants to ask a question, *they* will hold up *their* hand." No. Words such as *anyone*, *anybody*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *no one*, and *nobody* are considered singular and must take a singular pronoun and verb. Better say: "If *anyone* wants to ask a question, *he* will hold up *his* hand."

Wrong: "*Everybody were* there with *their* families."

Right: "*Everybody was* there with *his* family."

Wrong: "*Everyone will* please hold *their* tongue."

Right: "*Everyone will* please hold *his* tongue."

Wrong: "If *anybody* has lost a book, *they* will please turn in *their* names."

Right: "If *anybody* has lost a book, *he* will please turn in *his* name."

Note: In addressing a mixed gathering, it is now correct to use *he* and *him*, as: "*Anyone* who wishes may enter *his* name; I shall speak to *him* later about the contest." (It is no longer necessary to say: "*his or her* name.")

Of course, if all present are women or girls, *she* and *her* are correct, as: "If *everyone* has *her* work finished, *she* will please leave it at the desk."

EXPECT SUSPECT SUSPICION

"I expect so."

No. Do not use *expect* in the meaning of "to think" or "to suppose." Say: "I *suppose* (or *think*) so."

Wrong: "I *expect* I will go tomorrow."

Right: "I *think* I shall go tomorrow." Or, if you are actually planning to go, say: "I *expect* to go tomorrow."

Wrong: "I *suspect* I'd better go." Never. *Suspect* means "to be suspicious."

Right: "I *suppose* (or *think*) I had better go."

Wrong: "I *suspicion* that you are right about it." A gross error. Avoid it.

Right: "I *think* (*suppose* or *believe*) that you are right about it."

Wrong: "I *imagine* so." Do not use *imagine* for *suppose*, *think*, or *guess*.

Right: "I *think* so."

How to use the words correctly: "I shall *expect* you." "I *expect* to be there soon." "I did not *suspect* him of dishonesty." "I had no *suspicion* of his motives." "I *imagined* that we had wings."

FARTHER FURTHER

Question: Is there any difference between *farther* and *further*?

Answer: Yes. *Farther* is preferred for "spacial distance," as: "farther away," "two miles farther."

Further denotes "an extension of time, quantity, or degree," as: "without further delay," "to examine or investigate further."

FETCH and CARRY

"May I *bring* this book home to mother?"

No. *Bring* means "toward or to *oneself*." Better say: "May I *take* (or *carry*) this book home to mother?"

Wrong: "Please *fetch* this book to your mother." No. *Fetch* means "to go get and bring back."

Right: "Please *take* (or *carry*) this book to your mother."

Wrong: "He *carried* me to the dance." Not unless he literally took you up and bore you in his arms.

Right: "He *took* (or *escorted*) me to the dance."

Wrong: "It is a heavy load to *tote*." *Tote* is a ruralism of uncertain origin. I should avoid it. Better say: "It is a heavy load to *carry* (or *bear*)."

FEWER LESS

"He had no *less* than ten pairs of shoes."

No. Do not use *less* in referring to numbers. Better say: "He had no *fewer* than ten pairs of shoes."

Wrong: "He has *less* responsibilities than *me*," There are two mistakes here.

Right: "He has *fewer* responsibilities than *I* (have)."

Wrong: "He is *the less honest* of the three."

Right: "He is *the least honest* of the three."

Wrong: "He is *less big* than *me*."

Right: "He is *smaller* than *I* (am)."

How to use the words correctly: "It took *less* time than I thought." "This is of *less* value as it grows old." "The charge

was less than fifty dollars." "He has *fewer* subjects this semester." "No *fewer* than eight books were on the table."

FINICKY

Question: Is it proper to use the word *finicky*?

Answer: Quite. The word means "unduly or overly precise." Other forms with dictionary sanction are: *finical*, *finicking*, and *finikin*.

FOLK

FOLKS

"How are your *folks*?"

No. *Folks* for family is not good usage. Better say: "How is your family?"

Wrong: "You *folks* come to see us soon." Why you *folks*?

Right: "Come to see us soon."

Wrong (public speaker): "Good evening, *folks*!"

Right: "Good evening, *friends* (or, better, *ladies and gentlemen*)."

How to use the words correctly: "*the German folk*"; "*country folk*"; "*folklore*"; "*kinsfolk*." "The various *folks* (*nationalities* or *peoples*) of Europe."

FOOT or FEET?

"The board is *five foot long*."

No. "The board is *five feet long*." "It is a *five-foot* board."

Wrong: "He is *six foot tall*."

Right: "He is *six feet tall*." "He is a *six-footer*."

Wrong: "The boat is an *eighty-feeter*."

Right: "The boat is an *eighty-footer*." "The boat is *eighty feet long*." "It is an *eighty-foot* boat."

GERMANS

Question: If the plural of Frenchman is *Frenchmen*, why isn't the plural of German *Germanen*?

Answer: *Frenchman* is a compound of *French* plus *man*. *German*, *Burman*, *Mussulman*, *Ottoman*, and *talisman* are

not compounds of *man* and do not change the *-man* to *-men* to form the plural. The plural is formed by adding “-s” to the singular: *Germans*.

GET TO GO

GO TO

WENT TO

“I didn’t *get to go*.”

No. *Get to* for *manage* or *contrive* is dialectal. Better say: “I was *unable to go*.”

Wrong: “I will come if *I can get to*.”

Right: “I will come if *I am able* (or *can*).”

Wrong: “How did you *get to* leave so soon?”

Right: “How did you *manage to* leave so soon?”

Wrong: “I didn’t *go to* do it.” One should not use *go to* in the meaning of “to intend to,” “to mean to.”

Right: “I didn’t *mean* (or *intend*) to do it.”

Wrong: “Did you *go to* say that?”

Right: “Did you *intend to* say that?”

Wrong: “I *went to* go home for my book.” No. *Went to* should not be used for *started* (or *began*) to.

Right: “I *started to* go home for my book.”

Wrong: “As she *went to* sing, her voice broke.”

Right: “As she *began to* sing, her voice broke.”

GOTTEN

Question: Is it true that *gotten* is no longer correct?

Answer: *Gotten*, past participle of *get*, is frowned upon in England, where *got* is preferred. *Gotten*, however, has good dictionary support for United States use, just as we prefer to say *forgotten*.

GRAMMATICAL ERROR

Question: You state that *grammatical error* is correct. How absurd you are! Grammar, like the multiplication table, is absolute, fixed. There can be no error in it.

Answer: Man did not invent arithmetic; he discovered it. It is a changeless natural law. But English grammar is a recent human invention. Shakespeare, Milton, and the compilers of the King James Bible lived, wrote, and died before the grammarians descended on us in the seventeenth century.

No error in grammar? Ask the writers of dictionaries. Ask the eminent grammarians. Ask the teachers of English. Ask any student of the language. Ask any editor. Ask the unhappy creature whose duty it was to proofread this book!

They will testify that English grammar, like all other man-made things, falls more than a little short of perfection.

At any rate, we must keep in mind that the word *grammatical* is a simple adjective that means "of or pertaining to grammar."

Do we not speak of a *typographical error*? Is not a wrong answer in calculus a *mathematical error*?

I do not recall ever having seen a reputable authority which holds that *grammatical error* is incorrect. The phrase is consistent and proper in the meaning of "an error of grammar."

GRUELING

Question: Will you please discuss the word *grueling*?

Answer: This is in high favor with reporters, as: "He received a *grueling* cross-examination." At best, the word is a colloquialism. It has its origin in *gruel*, "a thin porridge of meal or oatmeal." Some authorities suggest that *grueling* is simply a corruption of *grilling*.

The word should be omitted from serious writing or speech.

HALE

Question: How can one be *haled* into court, since *hale* means "healthy"?

Answer: *Hale* also means "to haul," "to pull," "to draw," or "to tug." Tennyson used the word thus: "The rope that *haled* the buckets from the well."

HANG

Question: Which is correct: "She *hung* the picture" or "She *hanged* the picture?"

Answer: Either, but *hung* is best usage. On the other hand, *hanged* is preferred if "death by hanging" is meant.

HE or SHE

HIS or HER

Question: What is the best way to avoid such redundancies as: "If any *pupil* wishes to be excused, *he or she* may hold up *his or her* hand"?

Answer: It is permissible to address a mixed group thus: "If any *pupil* wishes to be excused, *he* may hold up *his* hand." Or better still: "If any *one of you* wishes to be excused, hold up *your* hand."

HEALTHFUL

HEALTHY

"This is a *healthy* climate."

No. The climate is not *healthy*; it is *healthful*.

Although some dictionaries consider *healthful* and *healthy* to be interchangeable within certain limits, grammarians generally regard *healthy* as meaning "having health" and *healthful* as meaning "giving or producing health."

Poor: "Fresh air is *healthy*."

Improved: "Fresh air is *healthful*."

Poor: "Swimming is a *healthy* exercise."

Improved: "Swimming is a *healthful* exercise."

Poor: "This is a *healthy* town."

Improved: "This is a *healthful* town." "The inhabitants are *healthy*."

Note: Since *health* means "free from physical disease or pain," "hale," "sound," "whole," the expressions *good health* and *bad health* had better be avoided, although the terms are widely used. Speaking of *good health* and *bad health* is as illogical as saying *rich wealth* and *poor wealth*.

HECTIC

Question: Is it permissible to say: "We had a *hectic* experience"?

Answer: Such usage is colloquial. The true meaning of *hectic* is "habitual or constant wasting of the body tissues," as in tuberculosis. Better say: "We had an *exciting* (thrilling or dangerous) experience."

HOLLER

Question: Is it correct to use the word *holler* in the meaning of "to yell"?

Answer: *Holler* really isn't a word; it is the illiterate corruption of the word *hollo*, pronounced: "HAH-loe."

Shakespeare's *holla* and the modern *hello* are other variants of *hollo*.

I—ME

HE—HIM

SHE—HER

THEY—THEM

The proper use of the above pronouns is shown in the following tables in almost every construction in which these pronouns may occur.

Note that when *I* is correct, *he*, *she*, and *they* also are correct. In sentences in which *me* is shown, *him*, *her*, and *them* likewise are correct.

For example, it is correct to say:

I am going.

Therefore:

He is going.

She is going.

They are going.

It is likewise correct to say:

Give it to *me*.

Therefore we should also say:

Give it to *him*.

Give it to *her*.

Give it to *them*.

If the reader will keep in mind that there are two distinct families of personal pronouns—the first consisting of *I*, *he*, *she*, and *they*, and the second consisting of *me*, *him*, *her*, and

them (see US-WE, page 376)—and that the first family *creates action* while the second family *is acted upon*, thus:

I	} hit {	me
he		him
she		her
they		them

there will be less likelihood of confusing the two families in sentences that are more complicated in structure than the simple forms: "*I am going.*" "*Give it to me.*"

I—ME

She is older than *I* (am old).
 He is stronger than *I* (am strong).
 It is heavier than *I* (am heavy).
 You can sing better than *I* (can sing).
 They are later than *I* (am late).

She resembles him more than (she resembles) *me*.
 He hates you more than (he hates) *me*.
 It becomes you more than (it becomes) *me*.
 You like him better than (you like) *me*.
 They invite you oftener than (they invite) *me*.

HE—HIM

I am older than *he* (is old).
 You are stronger than *he* (is strong).
 It is heavier than *he* (is heavy).
 She can sing better than *he* (can sing).
 They are later than *he* (is late).

She resembles Sue more than (she resembles) *him*.
 She hates me more than (she hates) *him*.
 It becomes you more than (it becomes) *him*.
 You like her better than (you like) *him*.
 They invite you oftener than (they invite) *him*.

SHE—HER

He is older than *she* (is old).
 He is stronger than *she* (is strong).

It is heavier than *she* (is heavy).
You can sing better than *she* (can sing).
They are later than *she* (is late).

He resembles me more than (he resembles) *her*.
He hates you more than (he hates) *her*.
It becomes you more than (it becomes) *her*.
You like him better than (you like) *her*.
They invite you oftener than (they invite) *her*.

THEY—THEM

She is older than *they* (are old).
He is stronger than *they* (are strong).
It is heavier than *they* (are heavy).
You can sing better than *they* (can sing).
You are later than *they* (are late).

She resembles him more than (she resembles) *them*.
He hates us more than (he hates) *them*.
It becomes you more than (it becomes) *them*.
You like him better than (you like) *them*.
They invite us oftener than (they invite) *them*.

IT IS I

It is (was) <i>I</i> .	He said that it was <i>I</i> .
It is (was) <i>he</i> .	He thought that it was <i>he</i> .
It is (was) <i>she</i> .	He knew that it was <i>she</i> .
It is (was) <i>they</i> .	He believed that it was <i>they</i> .

If he were *I*.
If I were *he*.
If you were *she*.
If we were *they*.

WITH "TO BE"

He thought it to be *me*.
He knew it to be *him*.
He believed it to be *her*.
He supposed it to be *them*.

He believed *me* to be *him*.
He knew *him* to be there.
He believed *her* to be truthful.
He supposed *them* to be there.

SOME MORE EXAMPLES

<i>You</i> and <i>I</i> went.	He is like <i>me</i> .
<i>You</i> and <i>he</i> went.	She is like <i>her</i> .
<i>You</i> and <i>she</i> went.	They are like <i>them</i> .
<i>You</i> and <i>they</i> went.	It is like <i>him</i> .

Between *you* and (between) *me*.
Between *him* and (between) *her*.
Between *them* and (between) *him*.
Between *me* and (between) *them*.

If you had been *I*.
If I had been *she*.
If it had been *he*.
If we had been *they*.

IMPLY**INFER**

These words are not interchangeable.

Imply denotes "that which the speaker or writer expresses, suggests, or hints at."

Infer denotes "that which the listener or reader understands, concludes, or believes to have been implied."

Use the words correctly in this sense: "I do not mean to *imply*." "Did you mean to *imply*?" "I do not wish you to *infer*." "Am I to *infer*?"

IN**INTO**

"He fell *in* the river."

No. The word *in* should not be used to designate "motion into." Say: "He fell *into* the river."

"We were sitting *into* the park." No. Use *into* only in the meaning of "entering." Say: "We were sitting *in* the park."

Wrong: "We entered into the house." This sentence is redundant.

Right: "We entered (or went into) the house."

If we keep in mind that *into* logically implies "a going into something"—as: "to go into business"; "to turn into a side road"; "to go into a foreign country"—we shall be less likely to make such grotesque and wholly inaccurate statements as: "I ran *into* her on the street." "The car crashed *into* a tree." "I bumped *into* a chair."

IS—ARE

WAS—WERE

"Everybody were there."

No. Such words as *everybody*, *anybody*, *nobody*, *somebody*, *everyone*, *anyone*, *no one*, *each*, and *either* take singular verbs. Say: "*Everybody was there.*"

Wrong: "*Each of the girls were invited.*" In this sentence, *each* means "each one." Omit "the girls," and "*each (one) were invited*" is at once seen to be nonsense.

Right: "*Each of the girls was invited.*"

Wrong: "*Everyone are going.*"

Right: "*Everyone is going.*"

Wrong: "*Either one of the words are correct.*"

Right: "*Either one of the words is correct.*" "*Either word is correct.*"

Wrong: "*Each one of the pupils were included.*"

Right: "*Each of the pupils was included.*" "*Each pupil was included.*"

Note: With *neither*, always use *nor*.

Wrong: "*Neither Jack or Jim are going.*"

Right: "*Neither Jack nor Jim is going.*"

IT RAINS

Question: When we say *it rains*, what does *it* refer to?

Answer: In the sentence *it rains*, the pronoun has no antecedent. It acts as a noun as the subject of the verb.

JUNIOR

Question: If a girl has her mother's name, may she be called *Junior*?

Answer: Why not? *Junior* does not mean "son of"; it means "the younger." All members of the Junior League are women; girls in high school and college are juniors. The form *Elsie Smith, Junior*, is correct.

LAY**LIE**

Lay and *lie* will trouble us no more if we keep in mind that *lay* means "to place," and *lie* means "to recline."

"But," the reader may object, "are not *lay* and *lie* complicated enough as it is without adding to the number of things one must remember about them?"

Not if we use this memory verse to fix in mind the distinction between the two words:

In *place*, the sound of *lay* occurs,
As if 'twere spelled with "y" [pla(y)ce];
And always in the word *recline*,
We hear the sound of *lie* [recli(e)ne].

A test sentence or two will show us that, with one exception, *lay* and *place* are synonymous, and *lie* and *recline* likewise may be interchanged:

Place (or *lay*) the dish on the table.
Let her *recline* (or *lie*) on the bed.

Now, if the words are wrongly used, which occurs often in the speech and writing of the best of us, the sentences are nonsensical:

Recline (or *lie*) the dish on the table.
Let her *place* (or *lay*) on the bed.

Thus we see that *lay* is an *active* word; it *does* something. *Lie*, on the other hand, is a *passive* word; it does nothing but rest or recline.

Now let us turn to the one exception to *lay-place* that must be kept in mind. In the following table, it will be seen that

lay and *lain*, respectively, are the past tense and the past participle of the verb *lie*:

<i>Present</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
lay	laid	laid
laying		
lie	lay	lain
lying		

It is certain that *lay* as the past tense and *lain* as the past participle of *lie* are the cause of the confusion that troubles most of us in determining which of the two verbs to use in the sentence.

By now, the reader is sure to be asking how this illogical exception came about. I cannot explain it.

If I had fashioned English grammar (but, praise be to Allah, I am not to be numbered among the grammarians!) I think I should have made *lied* both the past tense and the past participle of *lie*, exactly as *laid* is used with *lay*. I should have reasoned thus:

If I *tell* an untruth, I *lie*.
 If I *told* an untruth, I *lied*.
 If I *have told* an untruth, I *have lied*.

Therefore:

If I *recline*, I *lie*.
 If I *reclined*, I *lied*.
 If I *have reclined*, I *have lied*.

One *lie* is as good as the other, or so it seems to me. But no man can fathom the motives that lurk within the murky soul of the grammarian. No, *lay-laid*, *lie-lied* would have made things too easy for us luckless ones who must speak and write the mother tongue.

The grammarian who invented this bothersome exception recalls the old story of the colored boy who propounded the riddle:

"What is it that has a long neck, long legs, feathers all over its body, and barks like a dog? Give up? It's an ostrich."

"But," said his friend, "ostriches don't bark like dogs."

"I know they don't," was the reply. "I just put that in to make it harder!"

LAY—PLACE

I will *lay* the book on the desk.
 He will *lay* it there.
 Did you *lay* it on the chair?
 Shall I *lay* it there?
 Remind her to *lay* it on the chair.
 Will he *lay* it on the table?

LAYING—PLACING

I am *laying* the book here.
 I saw that he was *laying* it there.
 Were you *laying* it on the desk?
 She will be *laying* it there today.
 He has been *laying* it there often.
 She had been *laying* it there, but now she is *laying* it here.

LAYS—PLACES

He *lays* the book down.
 She *lays* the book on the desk.
 Who *lays* it on the table?
 He always *lays* it there.
 He *lays* bricks for the contractor.
 She *lays* the blame on him.

LAID—PLACED

I *laid* the book there yesterday.
 Who *laid* it on the desk?
 It has been *laid* there by someone.
 She will have *laid* it there by now.
 It should have been *laid* there, but it has been *laid* here.

LIE—RECLINE

I will *lie* on the bed.
 She said she would *lie* down.

Let him *lie* quietly for awhile.
The book should *lie* undisturbed.
She would always *lie* on the couch.
Do you *lie* down after luncheon?

LYING—RECLINING

I am *lying* down.
The book is *lying* on the desk.
She is *lying* on her side.
They are *lying* on the ground.
He is *lying* there.
You are *lying* here.
We are *lying* down now.

LIES—RECLINES

He always *lies* on his side.
She *lies* on the davenport.
The book *lies* there.
The town *lies* between the two hills.
Who *lies* on the bed?
She *lies* down after luncheon.

Exception:

LAY—RECLINED

I *lay* in bed all day yesterday.
I *lay* down yesterday and rested.
He *lay* on the couch and read.
They *lay* abed each morning until nine.
The book *lay* on the desk for many days.
She fell to the floor and *lay* still.

Exception:

LAIN—RECLINED

The book should have *lain* there.
It will have *lain* here for an hour.
The book would have *lain* on the desk, but she moved it.
It has *lain* here before.
He has often *lain* on the couch.

Note: One speaks of: "the *lay* of the land" and "of seeing how the land *lies*." "The miser *lays* away his gold." "One *lays* about him with a cudgel."

LEAVE**LET**

"*Leave* go of it."

No. *Let* and *leave* are often confused. They are not interchangeable. Say: "*Let* go of it."

Wrong: "*I'd just as leave* go as not."

Right: "*I had as lief* go as not."

Wrong: "*Leave* him be."

Right: "*Let* him be."

Wrong (sports announcer): "*He left* that one go by."

Right: "*He let* that one go by."

Wrong: "*Leave* us go to town."

Right: "*Let* us (not *let's* us) go to town."

Wrong: "*Leave* me pass, please."

Right: "*Let* me pass, please."

How to use *leave* correctly: "Will you *leave* the room?" "Will you *leave* me alone?" "I shall *leave* it here for you." "He asked for a *leave of absence*."

How to use *lief* correctly: "I had as *lief* go today, but I had *lief*er (pronounced: LEE-ver) go on Monday."

LIABLE**LIKELY**

"Do you think it is *liable* to rain?"

No. Do not use *liable* to express "likelihood" or "probability." Say: "Do you think it is *likely* to rain?" or: "Do you think it will rain?"

Wrong: "She is *liable* to come today."

Right: "It is *likely* that she will come today." "She *may* come today."

Wrong: "I am *liable* to be there."

Right: "It is *likely* that I shall be there." "I *probably* shall be there." "I *may* be there."

How to use *liable* correctly (the word means "answerable," "responsible," "having a liability, usually of an unpleasant or undesirable nature"): "He is *liable* for his debts." "If you speed, you are *liable* to arrest." "You are *liable*, under the law, for your actions."

LIKE, *In a similar manner to; closely resembling.*

"He *likes* two votes."

No. *Like* for *lack* is dialectal, though this mistake is frequently noted among educated persons, especially Southerners. The sentence should read: "He *lacks* two votes."

A network commentator, broadcasting from a political convention, made this slip of the tongue repeatedly, saying: "The demonstration is not *liking* in enthusiasm." The correct word is *lacking*.

"Do *like* I do."

No. Say: "Do *as* I do."

Wrong: "She is strong *like* he is."

Right: "She is *as* strong *as* he is."

However, it is correct to say: "He looks *like* my father." "She is *like* her mother."

"He smiled *friendly like*."

No. This usage is illiterate and is regarded by the authorities as a vulgarity. Say: "He smiled *in a friendly way*."

LOAN

Question: Is it permissible to use *loan* as a verb, as: "Will you *loan* me the book?"

Answer: Some authorities regard this usage as a colloquialism. However, the new *Webster's* lists *loan* as a verb, without classifying it as a colloquialism.

MAD

Question: Is it correct to say: "I am *mad* at you?"

Answer: *Angry* is the correct word. One is *angry at or about* a thing and *angry with* a person. Say: "I am *angry with* you."

MANNER BORN

Question: Which is correct, *to the manor born* or *to the manner born*?"

Answer: *Manner* is the correct word. *To the manner born* means "born to follow a certain custom."

Hamlet, I, iv, 15: "But to my mind, though I am native here and *to the manner born*. . . ."

Swinburne: "The eyes and the nerves of one *to the manner born*."

GOT MARRIED

"She *got married* in June."

No, decidedly. *Got* means "procured," "acquired," "obtained." "Obtained married?" Nonsense. Better say: "She *married* (or *was married*) in June."

Wrong: "She is going to *get divorced* from him." "Obtained divorced?" No.

Right: "She is going to *divorce* him."

Wrong: "He *got discouraged* and quit." "Obtained discouraged?" No.

Right: "He *became discouraged* and quit."

Wrong: "He *got discharged* from the Army."

Right: "He *was discharged* from the Army."

Wrong: "She *gets worried* about her son." "Obtains worried?" Hardly.

Right: "She *worries* about her son."

Wrong: "She *got graduated* in June."

Right: "She *graduated* (or *was graduated*) in June."

Wrong: "She *got puzzled* at his attitude."

Right: "She *was puzzled* by his attitude."

Note: One cannot *get* the past tense of a verb. *Get married* is as incorrect as *get died*, *get buried*, *get arrived*.

MIGHTY

"He is a *mighty* nice man."

No. *Mighty* means "powerful," "possessing great strength or might." Better say: "He is a *very* nice man."

Wrong: "That's *mighty* kind of you."

Right: "That is *exceedingly* kind of you."

Wrong: "It took a *mighty* long time."

Right: "It took an *unusually* long time."

Wrong: "I *sure* was *mighty* sick."

Right: "I was *very* sick." (*Ill* is considered by some to be the better word.)

How to use the word correctly: "He made a *mighty* ("an exceedingly great") effort." "The smith, a *mighty* ("a very strong") man was he."—"The Village Blacksmith."

"Wise in heart, and *mighty* in strength."—*Job ix: 4*.

MOST

ALMOST

"*Most* all the money was spent."

No. Say: "*Almost* all the money was spent."

Most and *almost* should not be confused; the words have nothing in common. *Most* means "greatest in number, rank, or importance." *Almost* means "nearly," "all but," "a little short of."

Wrong: "*Most* everybody *were* there."

Right: "*Almost* everybody *was* there."

Note: The use of *through* for *finished* is a colloquialism. Do not use it.

Wrong: "We are *most* nearly *through* dinner."

Right: "We have *almost finished* dinner."

MRS. ELSIE JONES

Question: When is it correct for a married woman or a widow (grass or sod) to call herself *Mrs. Elsie Jones*?

Answer: Never. According to correct form, *Mrs.* is used only with the husband's Christian names. Since *Mrs.* is equivalent to *wife of* or *married to*, *Mrs. Elsie* is obviously a misuse.

MUSS

Question: Is *muss* a good word?

Answer: It is a very expressive one. However, it is a dialectal variant of *mess*, which is by far the better word.

NEIGHBORHOOD

"I have in the *neighborhood* of three dollars."

No. *Neighborhood* means "vicinity," "a district or section near by." Say: "I have *about* (*almost* or *nearly*) three dollars."

NOTARIZE

Question: Is there such a word as *notarize*?

Answer: Yes, but it is pure jargon. *Notarize* is a malformed verb coined by false analogy with *economize*, *apologize*.

It is proper to form verbs of some nouns with the suffix *-ize*, since the latter means "to practice," "to carry on." Hence, *to economize* is "to practice economy"; *to apologize* is "to make an apology."

A *notary* is (roughly) "a *person* who certifies, attests, and acknowledges certain documents." *Notary* does not and cannot mean "an act or deed *performed* by a notary." Hence, to add *-ize* to the word results in the meaning "to practice notary," as irregular a form as would be "musicianize," "writerize," "singerize," "bookkeeperize."

However, since we have no general word in English to designate the work that a notary does (there is a real need for such a word, as is made clear by the wide acceptance of *notarize*), it seems that the word is destined to become entirely respectable, purists to the contrary notwithstanding.

(*Notarize* is sanctioned in the newest editions of Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition.)

NOTORIOUS

In modern use, the word *notorious* has an unfavorable connotation and should not be used in the sense of famous.

How to use the word: "He is a *notorious* forger. His trial was held before a *famous* judge."

OF**OFF**

"I bought it *off* a farmer."

No, emphatically. *Off* means "away from," "removed." Say: "I bought it *of* (or *from*) a farmer."

THE IMPERSONAL "ONE"

"*One* must watch *his* speech."

No. The sentiment is good, but the wording is wrong. Say: "*One* must watch *one's* speech."

Wrong: "If *one* acquaints himself with the facts, . . ."

Right: "If one acquaints *oneself* with the facts, . . ."

Wrong: "If he would think first, *one* would hesitate to lie."

Right: "If he would think first, *he* would hesitate to lie."

Caution is advised in the use of the impersonal *one*. If it is used in the first of the sentence, it must be repeated to the end. But, rather than write such a stilted monstrosity as: "*One* should tell *one's* friends that *one* will not be at *one's* home when *one* takes *one's* vacation," avoid the *one* construction altogether and recast the sentence thus: "When *he* leaves town, *he* should tell *his* friends that *he* will be away from home."

Warning: Do not mix in the same sentence the impersonal *one* with any of the personal pronouns, *I-me, he-him, she-her, they-them, we-us*.

ONE OF

"He is *one of the men* who is in training."

No. Many men are in training; he is merely one of them. Recast the sentence thus: "*Of the men* who is in training, . . ."? Absurd. Say: "He is *one of the men* who are in training."

Wrong: "She is *one of those girls who cries easily*." "*Girls cries easily*"? Impossible.

Right: "She is *one of those girls who cry easily*."

Wrong: "This is *one of the cars that was stolen*." No. Several cars were stolen, of which this is one.

Right: "This is *one of the cars that were stolen*."

Wrong: "He is *one of those men who always needs a shave*."

Right: "He is *one of those men who always need a shave*."

Wrong: "This is *one of those things that always makes me angry*."

Right: "This is *one of those things that always make me angry*."

ONLY

This simple but indispensable word often proves a stumbling block even to the best writers. Unless the word is placed correctly in the sentence, it may have an obscuring effect on one's meaning.

The rule is: Place *only* next to the word or phrase to be qualified.

Wrong: "I *only* have one brother." This sentence is incorrect, for it states literally that I am the sole person that has one brother or that I have nothing else in the world but one brother. Let us follow the rule and place *only* next, or as near as possible, to the word it is to qualify. At once the meaning is unmistakable:

Right: "I have *only* one brother."

Wrong: "My mother *only* writes to him." This implies that my mother does nothing else in life but write to him; or that mother does not speak to him, look at him, or think of him. She writes to him, and that is all. Now note how the meaning changes as *only* is shifted in the same sentence:

Right: "*Only* my mother writes to him." "My mother writes *only* to him." "My mother writes to him *only*."

Wrong: "She *only* had an apple for lunch." It is not probable that she is the only person in the world that had an apple for lunch, but that is precisely what the sentence states.

Right: "She had *only* an apple for lunch."

Wrong: "I *only* saw him once." This is nonsense, for it means that I am the only person who ever saw him once.

Right: "I saw him *only* once."

Wrong: "He *only* could speak German." Absurd. Millions can speak German.

Right: "He speaks *only* German." "He speaks German *only*."

Important: If, after attempting to apply the rule set forth above, you are still uncertain where *only* should be placed, reword the sentence so as to omit the word, as: "He speaks *nothing but* German."

OPUS

OPERA

Question: If *opera* is the plural of *opus*, how can one say that he is "going to the *opera*"?

Answer: *Opus* means a work, literary or musical, especially. The correct plural is *opera*.

By a queer anomaly, *opera* is also a singular noun meaning "a drama that is rendered in song," such as *Faust*. The plural of *opera* is *operas*.

ORNERY

Question: Is there such a word as *ornery*?

Answer: Yes, but it is a vulgarism. *Ornery* is a degenerated form of *ordinary*. Do not use the word.

PARTY

PERSON

"He is a peculiar *party*."

No, emphatically. Except in legal use, the term *party* always refers to a group of persons. Say: "He is a peculiar *person*."

Wrong: "She is the *party* that I spoke of."

Right: "She is the *person* (*woman* or *girl*) that I spoke of (or, better, of whom I spoke)."

Wrong: "A certain *party* of my acquaintance." Execrable. Why such pomposity?

Right: "An acquaintance of mine"; "an acquaintance"; "a friend of mine"; "a friend."

Wrong: "He is the same identical *party* whom I said was there." It seems incredible that this atrocious sentence actually appeared in a recent magazine of national circulation. It contains three glaring errors and means literally: "He is the same *group of persons* whom I said was there, I said."

Right: "He is the *person* (*man* or *one*) who, I said, was there."

How to use *party* correctly: "He was a *party* to the contract." "I belong to no *political party*." "We are attending a *dinner party*." "We are going with a *party of friends*."

PEOPLES

Question: I hear radio commentators speak of *peoples*. How can the plural word *people* have a plural?

Answer: *Peoples* is used correctly in the meaning of "races," as: "The *French people* and the other *peoples* (the *German people*, the *Italian people*, the *Spanish people*, etc.) of Europe."

PER

Question: Is it correct to say "miles *per* hour"?

Answer: In best usage, the Latin *per* is used only with Latin nouns, as: *per annum*, *per diem*, *per se*.

Avoid "miles *per* hour," "revolutions *per* minute," "two hundred dollars *per* month." In such phrases, use the indefinite article: "miles *an* hour"; "revolutions *a* minute"; "two hundred dollars *a* month."

PLURALS

Inquiries from a number of readers indicate that there is a rather widespread uncertainty concerning the correct plurals of certain nouns, especially the names of animals.

Although brief, the list below should be helpful. If your dictionary doesn't give the plural form of a noun, you can safely determine it by adding "-s" or "-es" to the singular.

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
antelope	antelopes
bacterium	bacteria
bear	bears
bison	bison
buffalo	buffaloes
cactus	cacti (KAK-ty) or cactuses
candelabrum	candelabra (KAN-del-AY'-bruh) or candelabrum
deer	deer
fish	fish fishes
moose	moose
octopus	octopuses octopodes (ahk-TAH-poe-deez) octopi (ahk-TOE-py)
sheep	sheep
shrimp	shrimps shrimp

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Many persons of intelligence and education are often stumped by the simplest point of grammar because of the vague and complex abracadabra that has always surrounded the teaching of English. There seems to be an unwritten law that writers of English textbooks must strive to make them as unintelligible as human ingenuity can devise.

For example, if one is undecided whether to say: "He likes to hear *my* singing" or "He likes to hear *me* singing," one wanders wearily through the bewildering maze of the English grammar and finally comes upon this lovely gem of enlightenment: When the substantive precedes the gerund (a verb ending in *-ing* and serving as a noun), it usually has the possessive form. But with the present participle (a verb ending in *ing* and serving as an adjective), its use in the sentence determines whether it is in the nominative or objective case!

Is it any wonder, then, that throughout school, and for the remainder of one's life, grammar is regarded as a distasteful subject that is "too deep for me"?

I have devised a simple key that will end our uncertainty once and for all. The key consists of these two words: *act of*. And this is the easy rule: If the words *act of* can be logically used in the sentence, use *my* instead of *me*, *his* instead of *him*, *our* instead of *us*, etc.

Away with grammatical hocus-pocus that results in nothing but confusion worse confounded! Away with substantives, gerunds, present participles, and objective cases! Notice how clear my simple key makes the usage in the following sentences:

Wrong: "He likes to hear *me* singing." No; it is my *act of* singing that he likes.

Right: "He likes to hear *my* (act of) singing."

Similarly:

"She doesn't approve of *my* (act of) using slang."

"*My* (act of) coming here was an accident."

"Father approves of *John's* (act of) taking me to church."

"Imagine *my* (act of) running for office!"

"I like to watch *your* (act of) riding the horse."

"I am sure of *his* (act of) coming here tonight."

"They approved of *my* (act of) studying French."

"We knew of *Mary's* (act of) passing the test."

"We disliked the *company's* (act of) discharging the old man."

"We regretted to hear of *our teacher's* (act of) resigning."

"Not everyone approves of the *Government's* (act of) aiding the unemployed."

"His sleep was disturbed by the *dog's* (act of) barking."

"She was frightened by the *car's* (act of) going so fast."

"She was distressed by the *ink's* (act of) staining her dress."

PRACTICAL or PRACTICABLE

Question: Please explain the difference, if any, between these two words.

Answer: These adjectives are often confused. *Practicable* pertains to "that which actually can be accomplished." *Practical* pertains to "the usefulness, benefit, or desirability of an accomplishment or thing."

This sentence will explain the distinction: "Although his invention has proved to be *practicable* (the machine actually works), it is doubtful if it will have any *practical* value (it serves no useful purpose)."

PREPOSITION. *Exploding the out-of-date theory that it is wrong to end a sentence with a preposition.*

Many readers have chided me, some almost to the point of abusiveness, for ending a sentence with a preposition, thus: "What are we coming to?"

One writes: "You are addicted to a literary crime that none but a depraved writer would be guilty of!"

My literary sins are many, I must admit, and at times my syntax must cause acute suffering among the grammarians, but in the case of ending a sentence with a preposition, I am innocent of any transgression against correct usage.

Since some teachers still hold that the end-of-the-sentence preposition is very wicked, this point of grammar needs clearing up once and for all.

It is not incorrect to end a sentence with a preposition. On the contrary, it is often desirable. Such usage has the sanction of so many authorities that, to list them, would require more space than may be permitted here. But one or two may be examined with interest, and, I hope, with profit.

Webster's New International Dictionary: * "English prepositions often follow the pronouns they go *with*, . . . as: 'Whom were you looking *for*?' 'The box that it came *in*.'" "

Faulty Diction: † "Some authorities object to the use of a preposition as the final word in a sentence, but such usage is in accord with the genius of all Teutonic languages. The correctness of such usage—often the necessity for it—is to be determined by the meaning intended to be conveyed."

* Published by G. and C. Merriam Company.

† Published by Funk and Wagnalls.

A Working Grammar of the English Language, by James C. Fernald: * "In English the preposition may at times appropriately and very forcibly follow the noun or pronoun which is its object."

In *King Lear*, Shakespeare wrote: "'Tis a naughty night to swim *in*."

Even the extreme purist will occasionally be heard to say: "What are you hinting *at*?" "Where did it come *from*?" "It is nothing to worry *about*."—and think nothing of it.

Most taboos are based on superstitions. Superstitions are irrational, and proceed from wrong beliefs. The taboo against the end-of-sentence preposition is as falsely conceived as is the popular notion that fish and milk, when taken together, inevitably result in "ptomaine poisoning" (an erroneous name for poisoning resulting from spoiled food).

Perhaps the best, and certainly the most entertaining, case for the final preposition is summed up in a splendid book, *Cruelty to Words*, by Ernest Weekley: † "The construction [preposition at the end of sentence] is really one of those practical concessions which help to make English the most expressive and flexible language in Europe. One can have too much of it, and liberty degenerates into license when the little girl, dissatisfied with the literary entertainment provided, asks peevishly: 'What did you bring that book for me to be read to out of from for?' But if we are to abolish 'What are you looking for?' 'The people I was dining with,' 'The business I was engaged in,' 'Nothing to write home about,' etc., we shall have to talk a much stiffer language than the one we are accustomed *to*!"

PROVED or PROVEN?

"It has been *proven*."

No. Would one say: "It has been boughten" or "She has been loven"? Say: "It has been *proved*."

Wrong: "It was *proven* conclusively."

Right: "It was *proved* conclusively."

* Published by Funk and Wagnalls.

† Published by E. P. Dutton and Company.

Wrong: "His love for Mary is *proven* by. . . ."

Right: "His love for Mary is *proved* by. . . ."

Wrong: "It is a *proven* fact."

Right: "It is a *proved* fact."

Wrong: "The oil well is in *proven* territory."

Right: "The oil well is in *proved* territory."

Proven, a Scotticism, once was in high favor and was used by the best American writers. But modern authorities stigmatize *proven* as archaic, obsolete, dialectal. It is placed in the rank of words that are not words. Do not use it if you wish to speak and write correct English. The only authorized past tense and past participle of *prove* is *proved*.

REAL

"He is *real* kind."

No. *Real* means "genuine." Do not use *real* in the meaning of "very," "rather." Say: "He is *very* kind."

Wrong: "It is *real* important."

Right: "It is *rather* (or *exceedingly*) important."

Wrong: "She sings *real* good."

Right: "She sings *well*."

RECIPE

RECEIPT

Question: Is it correct to say "a *receipt* for a cake"?

Answer: Yes. *Recipe* and *receipt* are interchangeable in the meaning of "a formula for preparing a dish."

However, best usage prefers *recipe* in this sense.

RECURRING, ADJECTIVE. *Occurring again.*

Question: I have heard the word *reoccurring* on the radio. Is it correct?

Answer: It is dubious at best. The better word is *recurring*.

REDD UP

Question: My friends laugh at me when I say: "I am going to *redd up* the house," meaning that I am going to make it tidy. Am I a lowbrow?

Answer: The expression *to redd up* is said to have originated with Scotch immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania. From there, the term passed into other states. It is dialectal and provincial.

In *Margaret Mailland*, we find a "well *redd up* house" mentioned; and in *Jane Eyre*, the words: "You are *redd up* and made decent." The expression is also found in an old proverb:

A seamstress that sews
And would make her work *redd*,
Must use a long needle
And a short thread.

RELATION

Question: Is it ever correct to speak of one's family as *relations*?

Answer: Dictionaries approve it, but the word is not best usage. Better say: *relatives, kin, kinsmen, kinsfolk, or kindred.*

REVEREND

"May I present *Reverend Jones*?"

No, emphatically. *Reverend* is not a title like *Doctor, Captain, Mayor*. Say: "May I present *my pastor, Mr. (or Doctor, if he has a degree) Jones*?"

Wrong: "Your sincerely, *Rev. John Jones*."

It is not good form for a minister to speak of himself as *Reverend* or to sign himself as *Rev.* It should be kept in mind that *Reverend* denotes "worthy of reverence, honor, or respect." It is merely an adjective like *courteous, portly, handsome*. A minister should sign himself: "Yours sincerely, *John Jones, Pastor, First Methodist Church*."

Very wrong: "I'm glad to see you, *Reverend*."

Would one say to the Mayor: "I'm glad to see you, *Honorable*?" or to a Justice of the Supreme Court: "How do you do, *Dignified*?" What title, then, should one use in speaking to a Protestant minister? If he has a degree, call him *Doctor Jones*. Otherwise, address him as *Mr. Jones*.

In addressing a letter to a minister, or in referring to or introducing a minister, use either of these correct forms: "*The Reverend Mr. John Jones*," or "*The Reverend Dr. John Jones*." But never, let it be emphasized, "*Reverend Jones*" or, worse still, "*Rev. Jones, D.D.*"

The proper address for a priest of the Roman Catholic Church is: "*The Reverend Father Jones*."

It is said that the word *reverend* occurs but once in the Bible, and, correctly, as a simple adjective: ". . . and *reverend* is His [the Lord's] name."—*Psalms cxi: 9*.

SAFELY

Question: Is this sentence correct: "I am glad you arrived *safely*?"

Answer: No. Would one say: "I see you have arrived *hungrily*"; "I am sorry your train arrived *late*ly"? An adjective, not an adverb, is needed in your sentence, for you are glad that your friend had a *safe* arrival.

The correct sentence is: "I am glad you arrived *safe*."

SALESLADY

Avoid this high-flown euphemism. Would one say *sales-gentleman*? *Salesman* and *saleswoman* are the correct forms.

There is nothing derogatory about the word *woman*. It is a naming word like *man*, *boy*, *girl*. Many women of refined and gentle manners are *ladies*, but all ladies are *women*.

SAME IDENTICAL THING

Question: I have seen in print *the same identical thing*. Is this correct?

Answer: No. Since *same* and *identical* have like meanings, the sentence is redundant. Omit one or the other and say: *the same thing* or *the identical thing*.

SAVIOR

Question: I note two spellings, *savior* and *saviour*. Why is this?

Answer: Such words as *odor*, *color*, *savor*, and *savior* are spelled with *-our* in England. Noah Webster struck out the

"u" in his original *American Dictionary* (1828), but the *-our* spelling in *Saviour* (note the capital "S") still survives in the United States when the word is used to mean "the Christ." Otherwise spell *savior* without the "u."

SECONDHAND

Question: Is it correct to speak of a *secondhanded* automobile?

Answer: No, for *-handed* means "having hands." It is correct to refer to a *secondhand* automobile.

SELF-ADDRESSED

Question: You ask for *self-addressed envelopes*. How can an envelope address itself?

Answer: The prefix *self-* means "to or for oneself." A *self-addressed envelope*, then, is "an envelope that a person addresses to himself."

SELF WORDS

There are but ten *self* pronouns in the English language. They are:

herself	ourselves
himself	themselves
itself	thymself
myself	yourself
oneself	yourselves

As the *self* words are correctly used in but two constructions, it is remarkable that they are a stumbling block to so many of us, writers and speakers alike. How often do we hear "He gave it to my wife and *myself*"? This mistake is made by those who are not sure whether to say *my wife and I* or *my wife and me*. They compromise on *my wife and myself* as a good way out of the difficulty, and succeed only in making bad matters worse.

Here are the simple rules:

1. Use the *self* words to emphasize the personal pronouns.
2. Use the *self* words to denote an *action* that one directs toward *oneself*.

Examples

1. Emphasis:

I *myself* am Heav'n and Hell.—Omar Khayyám.
 So lonely 'twas, that God *himself* scarce seemed to be there.—Coleridge.
 The Sun *himself* must die.—Campbell.
 Money *itself* is not enough.
 She *herself* admits it.
 Let the people-*themselves* decide.
 Thou *thyself* must answer for thy sins.
 We *ourselves* must be certain.
 You *yourself* admit it.
 You *yourselves* admire him.

2. Denoting action toward oneself:

In these sentences, let us use an arrow to show how the person or thing speaking or spoken of directs the action to or toward itself:

I benefit → *myself* in aiding him.—Sophocles.
 You will only injure → *yourself* if you take notice of despicable enemies.—Aesop.
 He who busies → *himself* in mean occupation.—Plutarch.
 Why don't you speak for → *yourself*, John?—Longfellow.
 Thou shalt not bow down → *thyself* to them, nor serve them.—Exodus xx:5.

Wrong: Some friends and *myself* went hunting.

Right: Some friends and *I* went hunting.

Wrong: *Herself* and husband have separated.

Right: *She* and *her* husband have separated.

Wrong: She looked at me and *himself*.

Right: She looked at *him* and me.

Wrong: *Yourself*, not I, are to blame.

Right: *You yourself* are to blame, not I.

Wrong: Ourselves and friends are invited.

Right: We and *our* friends are invited.

Wrong: Themselves and us are going.

Right: They and *we* are going.

Note: There are no such words as: *hissself; themself; themselves; theirself; theirselves; ourself; ourselves.*

SHALL—WILL

SHOULD—WOULD

The following tables have been arranged as a reference key to the proper use of *shall* and *will* and *should* and *would* in the various constructions in which they occur. The reader, thus, is spared a discussion of and the necessity of memorizing the grammatical rules that govern these troublesome auxiliaries.

SHALL—WILL

It will be noted that in the left-hand column *shall* and *will* denote "willingness," "expectation," "probability." In the right-hand column, they express "determination," "a fixed purpose," "a command."

The reader is warned especially against the use of *I will* and *we will*, except when he means to express "a determination," "a promise," or "a threat."

For example: "*I will* be glad to meet him" means literally: "*I am determined* to be glad to meet him," which is not the thought intended to be implied. Substitute *shall* for *will*, and the meaning is clear. "*I shall* be glad to meet him" means: "Meeting him is going to make me glad."

On the other hand: "*I will* be there; that I promise" signifies a determination to be there, come what may.

Avoid: "*I (we) will* be glad." "*I (we) think* that *I (we) will* go." "*I (we) will* try to come." Use *shall* in all such sentences.

<i>Willingness or Probability</i>	<i>Determination or Command</i>
<i>I shall</i> go (if nothing prevents).	<i>I will</i> go (in spite of any obstacle).

We <i>shall</i> go (if it does not rain).	We <i>will</i> go (rain or shine).
He <i>will</i> go (if he thinks it advisable).	He <i>shall</i> go (whether he wants to or not).
She <i>will</i> go (if she is strong enough).	She <i>shall</i> go (even though she is ill).
You <i>will</i> go (if you can afford the fare).	You <i>shall</i> go (even if you must walk).
They <i>will</i> go (if the day is clear).	They <i>shall</i> go (even if it rains).

Expressing a Future Condition

I *shall* have been there four times (when I go there again).

We *shall* have been married ten years (on our next anniversary).

He *will* have married (by this time next week).

She *will* have reached home (by three o'clock).

You *will* have had word from him (by noon tomorrow).

They *will* have sailed for Hawaii (if nothing has interfered).

In questions, these are the accepted forms:

Shall I help you?

Shall we dance?

Will he be there?

Will she like it?

Will you be seated?

Will they think of me?

SHOULD—WOULD

The choice between *should* and *would* is governed by the distinctions that determine the use of *shall* and *will*.

Avoid "*I would*" and "*We would*," except in speaking of some action that was customary in the past.

Do not say: "I (we) *would* be glad to come." "I (we) *would* consider it a favor." "I (we) *would* thank you for an answer." "I (we) *would* like a cup of coffee." Use *should* in all such sentences.

Willingness or Probability

I *should* be glad to go (if nothing interferes).

We *should* be there by Wednesday (if we start to-day).

He said that he *would* stop smoking (but of course he may not).

She said that she *would* meet him (but she is often unpredictable).

You *would* enjoy the scenery (if you were there).

They *would* benefit (by taking more exercise).

Obligation or Duty

I *should* be punished for that.

We *should*, for they expect us to.

He *should* be made to pay.

She *should* be ashamed of herself.

You *should* not do that.

They *should* be expelled from school.

Customary in the Past

I *would* always smile (whenever he told a humorous story).

We *would* return to the farm (every Christmas Eve).

They *would* wave (whenever a train passed).

He *would* study (until ten o'clock every night).

She *would* look forward to Christmas (as if she were a child).

You *would* often cry at night (when you were a baby).

Expressing a Future Condition

Should I come, will you meet me at the station?

Should we go by bus or train?

Should he decide to come, let me know.

Should she disappoint me, I shall not like it.

Should you stay, he will go.

Should they leave, we shall leave also.

Expressing a Past Condition

If I had studied, I *should* not have failed.

If we had hurried, we *should* not have missed the train.

If he had tried harder, he *would* not have made a low grade.

If she had told the truth, it *would* have saved her much SORROW.

If you had been there, you *would* have seen him.

If they had married, they *would* have been unhappy.

SHAMBLES

Question: What are or is *shambles*?

Answer: Most newspaper writers are fond of the word *shambles* to describe the effects of a bombardment on houses, buildings, or cities.

From actual newspaper accounts: "The explosion reduced the house to *shambles*." "A section of the town was left a *shambles* of ashes." "Nothing could be seen but the smoking *shambles* of the building."

Such usage is entirely erroneous. *Shambles* does not mean "debris," "wreckage," "rubble," "rubbish," or "ruins."

A *shamble* (from the Latin *scamellum*, "a bench") is "a bench or other place where meat is displayed for sale"; "a slaughterhouse."

If much bloodshed results from a catastrophe, the scene thereof may be figuratively described as a *shambles*, but not otherwise.

SHAN'T

Question: Is *shan't* a proper word?

Answer: Not in correct speech. It is a colloquial and out-of-date contraction of *shall not*. Do not use it.

SHUT OF

Question: In a news weekly, I noted the expression *to get shut of*. Is this permissible?

Answer: Not in formal writing. The expression is frequently heard in colloquial speech also as *get shed* (or *shet*) *of*.

SICK

Question: Am I sick *at* or *to* my stomach?

Answer: Neither, I hope. But if you must be sick, the correct form is: "I am sick *at* my stomach," for *at* signifies "the

point or place where a thing is." *To* implies "motion in the direction of"; "toward."

(See NAUSEATE, page 184, and STOMACH, page 236.)

SISTER-IN-LAW

Question: Is there a difference in the plural and possessive forms of *sister-in-law*?

Answer: Yes. Say: "I have two *sisters-in-law*." "This is my *sister-in-law's* house." "These are my *sisters-in-law's* houses."

SIT

SET

In preparing this treatment on the proper use of words, discussions of involved rules of grammar are avoided whenever it is possible. I have found that most worrisome problems of English usage quickly vanish if grammar is replaced by logic.

In the case of *sit* and *set*, a pair of words that the average reader is more than a little confused about, a simple key I have contrived will end our difficulties once and for all.

First, let us list the four forms, or tenses, of these indispensable verbs:

<i>Present Tense</i>	<i>Past Tense</i>	<i>Form with "-ing"</i>	<i>Form with</i>
			<i>"had," "has," "have" (Past Participle)</i>
sit	sat	sitting	sat
set	set	setting	set

So much for grammar. Now for the key that will tell us, without exception, which word to use: *Sit* means "to rest upon"; *set* means "to place upon."

How to use the key: Substitute *rest* for *sit* and *place* for *set*. If *rest* makes sense, *sit* is the correct word to use; if *place* makes sense, *set* is the proper word.

Examples

(1) "Please —— the baby in the crib." "*Rest* the baby?" No. "*Place* the baby?" Yes. Therefore: "Please *set* the baby in the crib."

(2) Come —— beside me. "*Place* beside me"? No. "*Rest*" beside me"? Yes. Therefore: "Come *sit* beside me."

Now use the key to prove the correctness of *sit* and *set* in these sentences:

Let us *sit* (or *rest*) out this dance.

He *sat* (or *rested*) on the bank of the stream.

Mother is *sitting* (or *resting*) in the armchair.

I should have *sat* (or *rested*) beside her.

Set (or *place*) the dishes on the table.

I *set* (or *placed*) it there yesterday.

He is *setting* (or *placing*) the plants in the garden.

I should have *set* (or *placed*) the book on the desk.

Grammarians tell us that *set* is a *transitive verb* and must take an *object*. This means that one must always *set something*. Therefore, in such sentences as "*Set the table*," "*The sun sets*," the *something* is understood, as:

Set (the dishes on) the table.

The sun sets (itself).

Sit, however, is an *intransitive verb* and needs *no object*. That is to say, one does not *sit a thing*; it is the thing itself that *sits* (or *rests*) *upon* (or *with*) *something*, as:

The uniform sits (or rests) well on him.

The idea does not sit (or rest) well with me.

Does a hen sit or set?

Again our key helps us to make a fine distinction and settles the age-old controversy between the grammarian and the poultry raiser, despite the fact that the latter will maintain until death, we may be sure, that a hen *sets* and is a *setting* hen.

Examples

(1) "Then hen——s on the nest." "The hen *places*"? No. "The hen *rests*"? Yes. Therefore: "The hen *sits* on the nest."

(2) "The hen is ——ing on the nest." "The hen is

placing”? No. “The hen is *resting*”? Yes. Therefore: “The hen is *sitting* on the nest.”

(3) “She is a ———ing hen.” “She is a *placing* hen”? No. “She is a *resting* hen”? Yes. Therefore: “She is a *sitting* hen.”

A farmer recently wrote to protest: “You say that a hen that sits on a clutch of eggs is a *sitting hen*. Nonsense! Suppose she gets off the nest and walks around the barnyard for a while. She’s not *sitting*; she’s *walking around*!”

But the fact that the hen has temporarily left the nest is beside the point. A doctor may spend the afternoon on the golf links, but he still is, by occupation, a practicing physician. Similarly, a teacher may spend a few weeks at the seashore, but her occupation still is teaching. Hence, a hen that leaves the nest momentarily for exercise or food still is a sitting hen, for, until her period of brooding is over, her occupation is sitting (or resting) on her eggs.

SLICK

“The ice was so *slick* that I fell.”

No. *Slick* is a dialectal corruption of *sleek* (which does not mean *slippery*). Say: “The ice was so *slippery* that I fell.”

Wrong: “He was too *slick* for me.”

Right: “He was too *tricky* (or *crafty*) for me.”

Wrong: “We went to a *slick* shop.”

Right: “We went to a *smart* (*stylish* or *exclusive*) shop.”

Wrong: “She was turned out *slick*.”

Right: “She was *handsomely* (or *stylishly*) *dressed*.” “She was *well groomed*.”

Wrong: “That’s a *slick* idea.”

Right: “That is a *good* (*clever*, *original*, or *splendid*) idea.”

Wrong: “I shall *slick* up the house.”

Right: “I shall *sleek* (*tidy* or *clean*) up the house.”

How to use the word correctly: “The bride was clothed in *sleek* (“burnished”) satin.” “I fear he is a *sleek* (“unctuous,” “crafty”) scoundrel.” “The audience was *sleek* (“well

groomed") in evening dress." "The race horse was *sleek* (from brushing) and handsome."

SLOWLY

Question: Which is correct: "Drive *slow*" or "Drive *slowly*"?

Answer: Either. *Slow* as an adverb has excellent dictionary support. Shakespeare himself wrote: "How *slow* time goes."

SNOOT

Question: Is it correct to speak of an animal's *snoot*?

Answer: No. *Snoot* is a colloquial variant of *snout*. The latter is the correct word.

SOME

"She is feeling *some* better."

No. This is not good usage. Better avoid it and say: "She is feeling *somewhat* better."

Wrong: "I feel *some* improved."

Right: "I feel *somewhat* improved."

Wrong: "Do you have *some* money?"

Right: "Have you *any* money?"

Wrong: "We made the trip in three hours; *that's going some*."

Right: "We made the trip in three hours; *that is unusually fast time*."

Wrong: "The cost was more than I could afford, *and then some*."

Right: "The cost was much more than I could afford."

Note also: "It was *some* party!" This is slang; correct usage is: "It was an *enjoyable* party."

SOMEBODY ELSE'S

Question: Should I say *somebody's else hat* or *somebody else's hat*?

Answer: *Somebody else's* is preferred by modern authorities to the obsolete form *somebody's else*.

SOMEWHEN

Question: To settle an argument, will you please tell us if there is such a word as *somewhen*?

Answer: *Somewhen* is a very respectable adverb, meaning "at some time or other." This word is frequently used by H. G. Wells. For example, writing of prehistoric man in *The Outline of History*, he states: "But *somewhen* he began definitely to sow."

Other *some-* words that have dictionary support are: *some- whence*, *somewhile*, *somewhither*, *somewhy*, and *somewise*.

SORT OF and KIND OF

"I am *sort of* tired."

No. *Sort of* should not be used for *rather* or *somewhat*. Authorities regard such usage as a vulgarism. It is correct to say: "I am *rather* (or *somewhat*) tired."

Wrong: "He is *kind of* effeminate."

Right: "He is *rather* (or *somewhat*) effeminate."

Wrong: "I am thirsty, *kind of*."

Right: "I am *rather* (*somewhat* or *a little*) thirsty."

Wrong: "What *sort of* a man is he?"

Right: "What *sort of* man is he?" The *a* is superfluous.

Wrong: "I am *kind of* annoyed."

Right: "I am *rather* (*somewhat* or *a little*) annoyed."

Wrong: "What *kind of* a book is this?"

Right: "What *kind* (or *type*) of book is this?"

SPEAK

Question: When I call for a friend on the telephone, should I say: "Let me *speak to* her," or "Let me *speak with* her"?

Answer: One *speaks to* an audience. One *speaks, converses, or has speech with* a friend.

THE SPLIT INFINITIVE

Most readers are familiar with the term *split infinitive*, but surprisingly few can tell you exactly what an infinitive is or how it is split.

What is an *infinitive*? An infinitive is a verb that is preceded by the word *to*, which is called the *sign of the infinitive*. In the following sentences, the infinitives and their signs are underscored:

I wish to state.

He tried to solve the riddle.

She began to sing.

His purpose was to protest the motion.

He intended to demand an apology.

What is a *split infinitive*? An infinitive is said to be *split* when an adverb is inserted between the sign of the infinitive (*to*) and the verb. To make this explanation perfectly clear, let us split the infinitive of the sentence first listed above, thus:

I wish *to* / briefly / *state*.

Here we see that the adverb *briefly* has split or separated the verb *state* from the word *to*, which is the sign of the infinitive.

Now let us split the infinitives in the rest of the sentences:

He tried *to* / quickly / *solve* the puzzle.

She began *to* / softly / *sing*.

His purpose was *to* / indignantly / *protest* the motion.

He intended *to* / rightfully / *demand* an apology.

Is the split infinitive a literary crime? While it is true that the split infinitive does not occur in Shakespeare nor in the Authorized Version of the Bible, and is virtually unknown before the nineteenth century, it is to be found in much of the great English literature. Byron himself has been called "Father of the Split Infinitive," so frequently does the split occur in his writings.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* comments: "The splitting has been widely objected to, but it sometimes is desirable or necessary, especially to avert ambiguity."

In other words, it is better to split the infinitive thus: "This course has been planned *to* / better / *train* girls for office work," than to avoid the split and destroy the meaning of the

sentence, thus: "This course has been planned *to train* better girls for office work."

Since the split infinitive is largely stigmatized by good authorities, it is wise not to use it unless it is necessary in order to make the meaning clear. Of course, a sentence may always be rearranged so as to avoid the split, thus: "This course has been planned *to give better training* to girls for office work."

SPOONFUL

Question: Is *spoonsful* the correct plural of *spoonful*?

Answer: No. The word *spoonful*, like *gallon*, *peck*, and *quart*, is a unit of measure, "the quantity that would fill a spoon." Thus, we see that we may have a spoonful of salt in a dish, cup, or shaker. The correct plural is formed by adding "-s" to *-ful*: *spoonfuls*.

The plurals of other familiar *-ful* words are: *armfuls*, *cupfuls*, *glassfuls*, *housefuls*, *mouthfuls*, *roomfuls*.

START OUT

"I am ready *to start out*."

Why *out*? Say: "I am ready *to start*." "We *started* (not *out*) on our journey."

SURE

SURELY

"*Sure* I will go."

No. This is slang. Shun it. Say: "*Surely* I will go."

Wrong: "It is *sure* cold."

Right: "It is *surely* (indeed or certainly) cold."

Wrong: "I *sure* did enjoy the show."

Right: "I *surely* (or better *certainly*) did enjoy the show."

Wrong: "She *sure* is pretty."

Right: "She *surely* (or *certainly*) is pretty."

How to use the word correctly: "I am *sure* of my facts." "Are you *sure*?" "The building rests on a *sure* foundation."

THAN ANY

"It is taller than *any* mountain in the world."

No. A mountain cannot be taller than itself. Say: "It is taller than any *other* mountain in the world."

Wrong: "She is more charming than *any* girl in the room."

Right: "She is more charming than any *other* girl in the room."

THANKS, NOUN. *An expression of gratitude.*

From a teacher of English: Your work is unusually accurate. Therefore, imagine my surprise at finding you writing: "Thanks for this information." Surely you know that *thanks* is a gross error. You should have said: "I thank you. . . ."

Answer: Sorry, but I find nothing wrong with *thanks*. Not only does it have excellent dictionary sanction, but it is found throughout literature as well.

Walt Whitman wrote: "*Thanks* in old age; *thanks* ere I go." In *The Sluggard*, by Isaac Watts, we read: "*Thanks* to my friends for their care." In *M'Andrew's Hymn*, Kipling wrote: "*Thanks* to Thee, Most High." *Thanks* is also used many times in the Bible, notably in *I Corinthians xv: 57*: But "*thanks* be to God, which giveth us the victory. . . ."

To your friendly criticism of my use of *thanks*, teacher, I join Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, III, iii, 14) in saying: "I can no other answer make but *thanks*, and *thanks*, and ever *thanks*."

**THAT
WHICH
WHO**

The distinction between *that*, *which*, and *who* is one of the knottiest points in grammar. Since grammarians, English authorities, and rhetoricians themselves are generally worse than vague about these relative pronouns, is it any wonder that we, who are of average education, should find *that*, *which*, and *who* to be so utterly confusing as to discourage any attempt to learn the rules by which they are used?

Yet, so important are these three pronouns, so constantly

are they used in our speech and writing, that we must find a simple, common-sense method to guide us.

Should we write: "the book *that* I read" or "the book *which* I read"? Should we speak of: "the man *that* was there" or "the man *who* was there"?

Let us lay down four simple rules that will guide us in all but the most complicated type of sentences:

Rule I:

(a) *That* is the *defining* word; it points to, designates, or names something that is *essential*.

(b) *Which* and *who* are *nondefining*; they merely describe, add to, explain, or indicate something that is *nonessential*.

Examples

"In the years *that* → lie ahead, he hopes to find security." Here *that* is used correctly, since it points to something that cannot be left out. Without "that lie ahead," the sentence is incomplete, as: "In the years he hopes to find security."

"He is the person *that* → wrote to me." Here *that* is used correctly, since it defines or points to something that is essential to the meaning. Without "that wrote to me," there would be no meaning, as: "He is the person."

"The books *which* I have read are on the table." Here *which* is used correctly. "Which I have read" is merely an explanation that can be left out without detracting from the meaning of the sentence, as: "The books are on the table."

"He *who* wrote to me is my friend." Here *who* is used correctly, since it describes or explains something that may well be left unsaid, as: "He is my friend."

In the following correct sentences, the arrow → shows that *that* points to something that is essential; the *who* or *which* clause is enclosed in parentheses to show that it is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence:

The only argument *that* → could justify such a conclusion.

The opportunities *that* → education had given them.

The problem *that* → confronted him.

There are other measures, too, *that* → may be considered.
 The principal theory *that* → he advanced.

The meeting (*which* was held yesterday) was a success.

The telephone call (*which* woke him in the night) was important.

He asked the woman (*who* had entered the room) to be seated.

John's teacher (*who* was fond of him) praised him warmly.

His wife (*who* had been injured) had been taken to the hospital.

Memory phrase: *That* is essential. *Who* and *which* are non-essential.

Rule II:

That cannot be used after any one of the prepositions: *about, above, against, among, around, at, before, behind, between, by, from, near, of, on, over, through, to, toward, under, upon, with, without*, etc. After prepositions, use *whom* for persons, and *which* for things.

Examples

The man <i>about whom</i> I spoke.	The trees <i>among which</i> we camped.
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The woman <i>at whom</i> he pointed.	The rock <i>by which</i> he stood.
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The boy <i>to whom</i> he wrote.	The log <i>upon which</i> he sat.
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The person <i>toward whom</i> he walked.	The awning <i>under which</i> he stood.
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Rule III:

Always use *that* after a superlative.

Examples

The *greatest* mistake *that* one could make.

The *most* *that* he could do.

The *best* *that* he had to offer.

The *gravest* sin *that* man commits.

The *most* dishonest man *that* I know.

Rule IV:

Use *that* after words of exclusive or comprehensive meaning, such as: *all, only, any, anything, everything, nothing*, etc.

Examples

All the evidence *that* he needed was . . .

The *only* other book *that* he had read.

A lovelier scene than *any that* we saw.

He is willing to say *anything that* will assist us.

He showed us *everything that* he had in stock.

There was *nothing that* was left undone.

Note: For the sake of euphony, it is better to use *that which* than *that that*, as: "It was *that which* he pointed out." "It was not *that which* confused me." "He did *that which* displeased me."

But it is correct to use *that that* in such constructions as: "She said *that that* was impossible." "*That that* was his plan is sure."

THESE KIND

"I like *these kind* of flowers."

No. Such words as *kind, sort, type*, are singular. Better say: "I like *this kind* of flower."

Wrong: "He is one of *those kind* of men."

Right: "He is *that kind* of man."

Wrong: "I read *these type* of books."

Right: "I read *this type* of book."

Wrong: "I dislike *those sort* of remarks."

Right: "I dislike *that sort* of remark."

THRASH

Question: Is *thrash* a good word?

Answer: Some dictionaries give it sanction. However, since it is a dialectal variant of *thresh*, I should use the latter word.

THROUGH

Question: Is it correct to say: "I am *through* with the book"?

Answer: Use of *through* in this sense is a colloquialism. Avoid it. One may go *through* a country or a tunnel, but one *finishes* reading or is *finished* with a book.

TOASTMISTRESS

Question: Is it correct to speak of a *toastmistress*?

Answer: No. *Toastmaster* is the correct title for both men and women.

Note: The tendency in modern usage is to drop such feminine titles as *authoress*, *songstress*, *poetess*, *chairwoman*, *aviatrix*, *postmistress*.

In the United States Post Office Department, *postmaster* only is officially used. Today a woman writer is an *author*; if she writes poetry, she is a *poet*. If she sings, she is properly termed a *singer*. A woman who presides at a meeting is correctly addressed as *madam chairman*. (See MADAM, page 168.) A woman who flies is an *aviator* (or an *angel*).

However, best usage still prefers the feminine forms: *actress*, *executrix*, *stewardess*, and *waitress*.

TRY AND

"*Try and* see me tomorrow."

No. One *tries to do* something. How illogical *try and* is will be clear if *attempt* is substituted for *try*: "*Attempt and* see me tomorrow."

But logic is fully satisfied with: "*Attempt to* see me tomorrow." Therefore, say: "*Try to* see me." "*Try to* do it." "*Try to* remember." "*Try to* do better."

US**WE**

"They gave it to *we girls*."

No. Omit *girls*, and the sentence is absurd: "They gave it to *we*." Say: "They gave it to *us girls*."

Wrong: "Us boys are invited." "Us are"? Certainly not; "We are" only is correct.

Right: "We boys are invited."

Wrong: "They shared the money *between* we students."

Right: "They shared the money *between* (among, if more than two) *us* students."

Wrong: "Us Americans are the most fortunate people."

Right: "We Americans are the most fortunate people."

VOCATION

AVOCATION

If a young woman is employed as a stenographer and she enjoys singing in the choir on Sundays, office work is her *vocation* ("means of livelihood"), and music is her *avocation* ("hobby," "diversion," "secondary occupation").

WAKE UP

Question: Is *wake up* permissible?

Answer: Any of these forms is in good usage: *wake, waked, woke, woken, wake up, waked up, woke up, awake, awaked, awaken, awakened, awoke.*

WAS

WERE

When used as the past tense of the verb *to be*, *was* and *were* cause little difficulty. The average reader does not think twice over such constructions as:

Was

As I *was* saying.
He *was* my friend.
She *was* resting.
It *was* lying there.
The doctor *was* late.
What *was* she doing?

Were

As we *were* saying.
You *were* my friend.
They *were* resting.
We *were* lying there.
The doctors *were* late.
What *were* they doing?

But the *conditional* use of *was* and *were* is one of grammar's chief troublemakers. Which word is correct in this sentence: I wish I (*were-was*) you?

We ordinary mortals of average learning, seeking advice from the grammar or dictionary, are bewildered when we are told that, in the subordinate clauses of certain conditional sentences, *was* is used to designate the *indicative mode*, and *were* is used to designate the *subjunctive mode*. "Confusion worse confounded!"

But, happily, these formidable terms of syntax are not the monsters they appear to be, and this treatise will brush aside all pedantic and obscuring cobwebs and rely on plain, common-sense logic expressed in familiar and understandable language.

Here, then, are the simple rules:

Rule I:

Use *were* (subjunctive) to express:

- (a) A condition that is *contrary* to fact.
- (b) A concession that is *contrary* to fact.
- (c) Always after *as if* and *as though*.

Examples

(a) If I *were* you, I should go. (But I am not you.)

If you *were* younger, you would enjoy dancing. (But you cannot be.)

If this *were* Wednesday, I should go. (But it is Monday.)

If he *were* here, I should be glad. (But he is in Europe.)

If she *were* a mother, she would understand. (But she is childless.)

If they *were* alive, she would not be in want. (But they are dead.)

If we *were* in New York, we should call on Mabel. (But we are not in New York.)

I wish he *were* my friend. (But he is not.)

If the letter *were* mailed yesterday, it would have come by now. (Therefore, it was not mailed yesterday.)

(b) Even though he *were* to apologize, she would not forgive him. (But he will not apologize.)

Even though she *were* well groomed, she would be unattractive. (She is not well groomed.)

If they *were* to ask me, I would not tell them anything. (But they will not ask me.)

Were is used correctly in all the foregoing sentences, since each expresses a condition or concession that is either *impossible* or *contrary to fact*.

(c) He looks as if he *were* angry.

She acts as though she *were* glad.

They act as if they *were* children.

We talked as though we *were* afraid.

Were is proper in the foregoing sentences, since *as if* and *as though* are equivalent to "it seems to be so, but actually it is not so."

Rule II:

Use *was* (indicative) to express a supposition that is *possible*, or that is a *fact*, or that is *thought of* as a fact.

Examples

If the book *was* lost, I didn't lose it. (And it was lost.)

If the car *was* new, why did it break down? (You bought it but yesterday.)

If she *was* at the meeting, I did not see her. (You say that she was.)

If he *was* angry, he didn't show it. (And I know that he was.)

Exception: *Was* is never correct with *you*, *we*, and *they* in any construction. *Were* only is correct.

WELL AND GOOD

"She sings *real good*."

No. She may be a good singer, but she does not sing *good*. Say: "She sings *well*."

Wrong: "Junior has learned to write *right good*." No, decidedly.

Right: "Junior has learned to write *well* (*clearly, legibly or plainly*)."

Wrong: "She draws *mighty good*." There are two mistakes here; do not use *mighty* for *very* or *rather*.

Right: "She draws *well* (*splendidly or artistically*)."

WELT, NOUN. *A reinforced edge or border.*

"My skin is covered with *whelps*."

This common expression is amusing, interesting, and highly inaccurate. A *whelp* is "the puppy of a dog," or "the cub of a bear or wolf." Do not speak of being *covered with whelps* unless you mean to say that your person is being overrun with very young quadrupeds.

"My skin is covered with *welts*."

No. A shoe or a piece of cloth may properly have a *welt*, but not the human skin. If your skin is swollen from the bite of insects or by blows from a stick or strap, say that your skin is covered with *bumps*, *ridges*, *wales*, *weals*, *wheals*, or *protrusions*.

WHO

WHOM

The relative pronouns *who* and *whom* are also among grammar's important troublemakers. Often they are stumbling blocks for writers of the highest skill who lose themselves in the mazes of involved sentence structure and can find no way out of the tangle.

Let us employ a simple device to guide us on the right path.

(*Caution:* Our device is not intended to be an infallible guide for *who* and *whom* in every possible construction; but it will be sufficient for the needs of the average person in ordinary speech and writing.)

Let us pretend that there are two men named Mr. *He-who* and Mr. *Him-whom*.

He-who is aggressive and energetic; he believes in action, in getting things done.

But things are always happening to *Him-whom*, the passive, nonaggressive one.

Now let us imagine that the two have quarreled and that the quarrel has led to blows. Since *He-who* likes action, and pacifism is the choice of *Him-whom*, it is certain that:

"*He* struck → *him*."

Note that the arrow shows the originator of the action, the

direction of the action, and the receiver (the object) of the action.

Let us push into the throng that surrounds the fighters. We ask a bystander:

"Who struck → *whom*?"

The bystander answers:

"He is the man *who* struck → *him*."

But he does not point out the aggressor. Whereupon we ask:

"When you say *him*, of *whom* are you speaking?"

The reply is:

"He *who* stands there struck → *him* at *whom* I am pointing." (*He* stands → there; *he* struck → *him*. I am pointing at → *whom*.)

Now that we are acquainted with the characteristics of our two imaginary foes, let us put them into other situations in which, we may be sure, *he-who* will continue to create the action which will always be received by *him-whom*.

He-who acts:

"Who are you to give commands?" (*Who* are → you?)

"He is the man *who* she thought had failed." (*He* is the man *who* had → failed, she thought.)

"Mr. C., *who* they tell me was injured." (*Who* was → injured, they tell me.)

"The man *who* he saw was worried." (*Who* was → worried, he saw.)

"He is my friend, *who* I hope will be here." (*He who* will be → here, I hope.)

"Point out the man *who* you said was there." (The man *who* was → there, you said.)

"They plan to assist B., *who* they are afraid might fail." (*Who* might → fail, they are afraid.)

("He was the kind of man *who* one knew at a glance was aggressive." (*He who* was → aggressive, one knew.)

"He is the man *who* I think shot the deer." (*He who* shot → the deer, I think.)

Him-whom is acted upon:

"That is the man *whom* I saw." (I saw → *whom*.)

"This is my brother *whom* you know." (You know → *whom*, my brother.)

"This is the man *whom* we saw." (We saw → *whom*.)

"This is the friend *whom* you met before." (You met → *whom*, the friend.)

"The second man *whom* I did not recognize." (I did not recognize → *whom*.)

Note: One may *see, meet, or recognize* a man, but one cannot *think, say, or suppose* a man.

Now let us consider a sentence that, at first glance, seems to confuse the identity of *he-who* and *him-whom*: "He is my friend whom you met yesterday." How is it that *he* can be *whom*? It is because the friend in this sentence is both the creator and the receiver of action, thus:

"*He* is → my friend." (You met → *whom*.)

Similarly:

He whom you struck is injured. (*He* is → injured. You struck → *whom*.)

He is the man *whom* we saw we had injured. (*He* is → the man. We had injured → *whom*.)

Important: *Whom* is always used with the prepositions: *about, above, against, among, around, at, before, behind, between, by, from, near, of, on, over, through, to, toward, under, upon, with, without*, etc.

"About *whom* were you speaking?" (You were speaking about → *whom*.)

"Above *whom* were you standing?" (You were standing above → *whom*.)

"Against *whom* were you playing?" (You were playing against → *whom*.)

"Among *whom* are you visiting?" (You are visiting among → *whom*.)

Note: Whom is used even if the sentence ends with a preposition:

"Whom were you looking at?" (You were looking at → *whom*.)

"Whom were you hiding behind?" (You were hiding behind → *whom*.)

"Whom were you sitting between?" (You were sitting between → *whom*.)

Thus it is seen that, if we define the action and know *who* creates the action, there is little difficulty in determining *whom* the action is received by (the action is received by or affects → *whom*.)

Note: *He-who* has a twin sister named *She-who*; they have several cousins named *They-who*. Likewise, *Him-whom* has a twin sister named *Her-whom*, and their cousins are named *Them-whom*.

These two families are very clannish. If you try to mix them, discord is sure to follow.

WROUGHT

Question: I am told that the word *wrought* is the past tense of *work*. If this is correct, could one say: "I once *wrought* in an office"?

Answer: No. *Worked* is correct. *Wrought*, past tense and past participle of *work*, is used to denote "manufacturing," "shaping," "processing," "hammering," as: *wrought* (or *worked*) iron," "a curiously *wrought* ring," "*wrought* oaken beams."

YOU ALL, *All of you; every one of you.*

If you would like to start a furious debate, accuse Southerners of saying *you all* in referring to one person. But I warn you that the waving of this particular red rag will get you promptly and flatly squelched.

It will be vehemently pointed out that, although north of Mason and Dixon's line it is believed that Southerners use *you all* in the singular, nothing could be further from the truth.

"Ah, yes," you may reply, "but I have heard the expression misused many times by a Southern friend who thinks nothing of asking, let us say, a food-store salesman: 'Do *you all* have such and such a brand?' "

Southerners will toss this aside with the declaration that such use of *you all* simply means "you jointly," "all of you," "you and your family, friends, and associates," "you and your establishment"—an idiomatic usage that is native to and customary in the South, and that is wilfully misinterpreted by non-Southerners.

A case in point is a letter addressed to me by an Easterner who recently went to live in the state of Georgia. He emphasizes the use of *you all* in the singular in this amusing conversation between himself and an itinerant Negro yard man:

"Cap'n, does *you all* (pronounced "yawl") want your yard lawned?"

"Do you have the necessary implements?"

"Says which?"

"I say, do you have your own tools?"

"Oh, yassah; dat is, I is excusin' de grass-mower."

It should be explained that the Negro, in thus addressing his prospective employer, regarded *you* as a little too familiar and informal for the occasion, and used *you all* in the sense of "all you white folks who live here, of whom you, Cap'n, are the principal representative."

Such usage has the approval of highest authority. Although some dictionaries call it a Southern colloquialism, I find *you all* in much good literature that was written before the South was ever thought of. Shakespeare used it freely and unashamedly: "I see you all are bent to set against me for your merriment."—*A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III, ii, 145. "You all did love him once."—*Julius Caesar*, III, ii, 107. It is found in the Bible in the famous benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . be with you all. Amen."—II *Corinthians* xiii, 14.

The late J. C. Harris, author of the Uncle Remus stories and authority on Southern folklore, declared that *you all* and *we all* invariably refer to more than one individual.

It is my theory that what confuses non-Southerners is not so much the use of *you all*, as the three pronunciations that are heard in the South: "YOU all," "you ALL," and, most frequently, "yawl." I myself have heard three inflections in one sentence, as: "'YOU all' come to dinner; we'd like to have 'you ALL' if 'yawl' can come."

But right or wrong, this pleasant expression is so firmly fixed in cultured Southern speech that it must be accepted by the rest of the world as good usage in the South.

The whole case for *you all* from the Southern viewpoint is summed up in these clever lines of unknown authorship:

You all means a race or section,
Family, party, tribe, or clan;
You all means the whole connection
Of the individual man.

In the singular it's never
Used in this part of the land;
But we give up hope of ever
Making *you all* understand.

X

THE ORIGINS OF FAMILIAR EXPRESSIONS

ALTHOUGH many slang words and popular figures of speech are of unknown origin, more than a few may be traced to the classics and to mythology, while others are found to have rich historic and romantic backgrounds.

Do you know the origin of any of the common expressions in this typical American conversation?

John: Was I on the *anxious seat*?

Henry: *Behind the eight ball*, eh?

John: And how. When I couldn't pay the note, this *shyster* got as *mad as a March hare* and tried to make me *pay through the nose*.

Henry: But I thought you were *well heeled*?

John: So did he, and like a real *dyed-in-the-wool* bluffer, he thought he could give me the *blues* by threatening to foreclose on me *lock, stock, and barrel*.

Henry: What happened?

John: Nothing but a *flash in the pan*. He was just a *fizzle*.

Henry: Well, that *takes the cake*!

More than one surprise awaits us as we follow each of these expressions to its source.

Anxious seat, for example, has a religious background in the custom at early protracted meetings (revivals or camp meetings) of conducting repentant sinners to the *anxious seat*,

or *mourner's bench*, near the altar, there to receive prayerful aid in seeking salvation.

In a pool game called *Eight Ball*, all the other balls must be pocketed before the eight ball may be pocketed or struck directly with the cue ball. Hence, when a player finds his cue ball *behind the eight ball*, his position is one of great difficulty.

The term *shyster* was coined during the early days of the New York Tombs. *Shysters* were unscrupulous lawyers who offered their professional services to the unfortunate inmates of the grim bastille, and, collecting their fees in advance, would thenceforth fight *shy* of their duped clients.

The expression *mad as a March hare* is ancient indeed. It is an allusion to the wild, uncontrolled antics of the male hare during the mating season, which usually is in the month of March. The March Hare and the Mad Hatter are familiar characters in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In company with the comical, sleepy dormouse, they are companions of Alice in what surely is the maddest tea party in literature.

Odin, a legendary ruler of Sweden, assessed a tax of "one penny per *nose*." The tax, therefore, was said to have been collected *by, or through, the nose*.

In the jargon of the cockpit, the spur or gaff on the leg of a game cock is often called a *heel*. A bird that has a good natural spur or a well-placed steel gaff is said to be *well heeled*, hence quite able to take care of himself.

Dyed in the wool dates from pre-Civil War days. It means to dye the wool before spinning or weaving it.

When Daniel Webster was a student, he rode on horseback to Dartmouth College. His clothes were homespun. *The College Courant*, 1871, reports: "He had the *blues* for many days after his arrival, because a drenching rain had washed the indigo from his suit *dyed in the wool* at home, coloring his skin darkly, deeply, beautifully blue."

The picturesque *lock, stock, and barrel* was given to us by the early American settler whose most important possession was his flint-lock rifle, consisting of three parts: the lock, the stock, and the barrel. Frequently these rifles would misfire; only the powder in the *pan* would *flash*, producing a *fizzle*.

It is certain that *to take the cake* originated in the once popular *cake walk* of the Southern Negro. Couples would compete for an elaborately decorated cake by *cake walking*, a complicated prancing walk performed to music. However, it is also said that the sentries of ancient Greece who were able to go through the night without falling asleep were allowed, by way of reward, to *take the cake* of roasted wheat and honey.

Other familiar expressions follow in alphabetical order.

A NUMBER ONE

In the days of the sailing vessel, Lloyd's of London used letters and numerals in rating the insurability of ships. *A-1* (*A Number One*) marked a ship as the best type of "risk."

THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR

Question: Who coined the phrase *the almighty dollar*?

Answer: It is credited to Washington Irving, who wrote: "*The almighty dollar*, that great object of universal devotion throughout our land."

ALPHABET

Question: What is the origin of the word *alphabet*?

Answer: It is from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *beta*.

AMERICA

Question: Where did we get the anthem "*America*"?

Answer: "*America*" is not an anthem but a hymn, although the air to which it is sung is the music of the national anthem of England, "God Save the King."

"*America*" was written in 1832 by the poet-clergyman Samuel Francis Smith, and the hymn was first sung at his church in Boston.

AT LONG LAST

Question: Where did the redundant expression *at long last* originate?

Answer: It has been traced in literature as far back as 1398.

Many authors have used the phrase. Lowell, in *Study Wind*, wrote: ". . . the hearty abuse of human nature, which *at the long last* is always to blame."

The expression was popularized by King Edward VIII (now Duke of Windsor). In his farewell broadcast after abdication, December 11, 1936, he said: "*At long last* I am able to say a few words of my own . . . but until now it has not been constitutionally possible for me to speak."

ATTABOY!

One would suppose that *attaboy!* is a slang expression of recent coinage. But it has evolved from the hundred-year-old *that's the boy!* which was a popular phrase of approval in the sports world of the roaring forties. It was spelled variously: *st'boy*, *a'stheboy*, *stheboy*, *stubboy*, *sooboy*.

BAKER'S DOZEN

A *baker's dozen* is not twelve but thirteen. It was formerly the practice of bakers to give an extra loaf or bun with every dozen sold, thus guaranteeing full weight.

BANGTAIL

Bangtail has only recently been applied to horses. Originally, it meant "a cow, the tuft of whose tail had been banged"—that is, cut straight across to show that the animal had been counted in the roundup.

BARBECUE

The word *barbecue* is from the American Spanish *barbacoa*, a word of Taino origin, meaning "an elevated frame or platform." Hence, a frame on which meat and fish are roasted or smoke-dried.

BOGUS

According to De Vere, *bogus*, meaning "worthless," is the corruption of the name *Borghese*.

A notorious forger of the last century bore this name. He was a swindler of first rank. "His transactions were so extensive, that his name, pronounced, with American freedom, first *Borges* and then *Bogus*, spread over the whole union."

BOMBPROOF

Question: Is the word *bombproof* of recent origin?

Answer: No. It was in common use in the armies of the North and South in the war between the States. Quartermasters and supply officers were nicknamed *bombproofs* because of their anxiety to remain beyond the fire of the enemy.

BOOMER—SOONER

Question: Oklahoma is called the *Sooner State* and the *Boomer State*. Which is right?

Answer: Either. In the land rush of 1889, much of the best land was reserved by *sooners*, who eluded the guards and staked their claims before the official opening of the Territory.

The name *boomer*, according to the new *Webster's*, refers to Oklahoma's later oil boom—but many oldtimers of Oklahoma deny this, saying that *sooner* and *boomer* were synonymous terms during the land rush.

BORAX

Question: What is the origin of the term *borax* as applied to furniture and furniture stores?

Answer: *Borax* is a corruption of the German word *borgen*, meaning "to borrow."

In former days, furniture stores doing an installment business (*borgen stores*) regarded merchandise sold to customers as "borrowed" until the final payment had been made. Hence, repossessions were quickly and often unjustly effected without legal process.

Today, *borax stores* are installment houses dealing mainly in poorly made merchandise, which, by means of selling and advertising trickery, is sold for many times its regular retail value.

Shoddy, or jerry-built, furniture is also known as *borax*.

BRAND NEW

This expression originates in the early custom of *branding*, or trade-marking, all merchandise—especially dress goods—with the manufacturer's name or device.

Material thus marked would show the *brand* after the first few washings only.

THE BRONX

Question: Can you explain why it is "*The Bronx*"?

Answer: Among the earliest land owners of New York was one Jonas *Bronk* (*Bronck* or *Brunk*), who cultivated some land along the Aquahung River, also known as *Bronk's River*.

The Borough of *The Bronx* takes the article *the*, as is customary in place names that derive from the names of rivers, as: *Valley of the Hudson (River)*, *Valley of the Gila (River)*.

According to the Reference Department of the New York Public Library: "Though in speaking of the Borough, people do say *The Bronx*, it is a common practice to write a street address and follow it simply by *Bronx*, N. Y. However, the official title given in the charter of 1898 is *Borough of The Bronx*. The county, on the other hand, is called *Bronx County*."

BUCKAROO

Buckaroo is a corruption of the Spanish word *vaquero*, meaning "cowherd," and pronounced:

vah-KAY-roe

BUNK, SLANG. *Humbuggery; that which is wilfully misrepresented or exaggerated.*

Bunk is a shortened form of the name *Buncombe*, and grew out of a once popular expression *talking for Buncombe*.

The phrase originated early in the last century. According to Wheeler's *History of North Carolina*: "Several years ago, in Congress, a member from Buncombe County arose to address the House, without any extraordinary powers, in manner or matter, to interest the audience. Many members left the hall. Very naïvely he told those who remained that they might go too; he should speak for some time, but he was 'only talking for Buncombe.'"

BURY THE HATCHET

In pioneer days, the tomahawk was a favorite weapon of both Indian and settler. It also was used by the Indians as a

ceremonial symbol. They *buried the hatchet* when they made peace and dug it up again on the breaking out of war.

CADDIE

Question: What is the origin of *caddie*?

Answer: *Caddie* is a Scotch variant of the French *cadet* (pronounced: ka-DEH). The original Scotch meaning was "one who solicits odd jobs, as an errand boy."

Note: The word *cad* also derives from *cadet*.

IN CAHOOTS

Cahoots is a corruption of *cohorts*, "members of a company or band"; hence, those who have the same interest or who seek a common objective, as: "We are *in cahoots together*," for "We are *cohorts*."

CANARY

Question: Is the *canary bird* named for the Canary Islands, or vice versa?

Answer: The bird was named for the islands, but the islands were named for—what do you suppose?—large, fierce dogs!

It happened this way: In 40 B.C., the King of Mauretania visited a group of remote islands in the Atlantic Ocean. To the islands he gave the name *Canaria* (from the Latin *canis*, "dog"), ". . . so called from the multitude of dogs of great size." In time, the name was corrupted to *Canary*. Hence, when we speak of a *canary bird*, we are saying, literally, "dog bird!"

CINCH

A strong and tight *cinch* holds the saddle securely to the horse's back and prevents the saddle from shifting beneath the rider.

A *cinch*, therefore, is anything that is sure, safe, secure; "a sure thing."

COCKTAIL

The origin of *cocktail* is unknown, but the drink has been known since colonial days. In an old book of the last century,

a *cocktail* is described as: "A drink of very seductive character that makes a fellow wish he had a throat a mile long and a palate at every inch of it."

COMMENCEMENT

Question: Why is *graduation day*, the *end* of school, called the *commencement*?

Answer: This lovely linguistic peccadillo can be charged against the scholastic master minds of an earlier day. They adroitly reasoned that, on the last day of college, the graduates thereof *commence* to hold their degrees!

English university students usually speak of Degree Day, or Speech Day.

Note: Many authorities hold that: "He *graduated* from (or *at*) Yale" is erroneous, the correct form being: "He *was graduated at* Yale."

A COON'S AGE

A *coon's age* is an indefinite length of time, such as the number of years a raccoon may be expected to live. There is no connection with the vulgarism *coon*, a derisive term for Negro.

COP, SLANG. *Policeman.*

Question: Why is a policeman called a *cop* or *copper*? I fail to see any connection between officers and pennies.

Answer: There is no connection. The slang word *cop* (verb) means "to take," "to catch," or "to capture." A *copper*, then, is "one who *cops* a lawbreaker."

There is another theory, however, that, while unauthenticated, is deserving of mention: Early in the last century, when Sir Robert Peel was instrumental in forming the police organization of London, the officers were given the nicknames *bobbies* (diminutive of *Robert*), and, from the copper buttons of their uniforms, *coppers*.

It is said that the first police uniforms of Boston were likewise embellished with gleaming copper buttons. Hence, the American use of the term *copper*.

Whatever the origin, the terms *cop* and *copper* are highly

offensive to police officers, and I strongly advise against use of the words the next time you are stopped by a traffic c— (oops!)-officer.

CORNEY

Question: What is the origin of the expression *corney*?

Answer: It is a slang word coined by jazz musicians from *corn-fed*. It means "countrified," "small-townish," "dull," "stupid," "behind the times."

The word is also spelled *conry*.

CRAWFISH

Question: What is the origin of the expression *to crawfish*, meaning "to back out?"

Answer: The *crawfish* (correct name *crayfish*) possesses an astonishing facility to swim backward when frightened or disturbed. The allusion is obvious.

Note: In the South especially, the *crayfish* (often called *crawdad*) is esteemed for its fine meat and delicate flavor. Children and Negroes catch the creatures by dangling a bit of meat on a string down the *crawfish hole*, which invariably leads to water. When a stealthy tugging is felt, the string is slowly pulled in with the crustacean clinging greedily to the meat.

CURFEW

Question: The etymology of *curfew* puzzles me. How did it originate?

Answer: *Curfew* is an Anglicized corruption of the French *couvre-feu* ("cover fire"). In parts of Europe in the Middle Ages, there was a law requiring householders to cover or extinguish their lights and fires on the stroke of a bell in the evening.

The English word has lost all association with "cover fire," and designates a bell or other signal that orders the retirement of persons (mostly children) from streets and other public places.

DICKENS

Question: Is *what the dickens* from the name Charles Dickens?

Answer: There is no connection at all. Shakespeare used the expression two hundred years before Dickens was born. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mrs. Page exclaims: "I cannot tell *what the dickens* his name is. . . ."

Some authorities hold that *dickens* is a contraction of *devilkins*.

DICKER

Question: Is *dicker* a slang word?

Answer: By no means. It is from the Latin *decuria*, "a division of ten," a word employed by the Romans to denote a unit of ten skins or pelts used in barter with barbarians. In early America, to *dicker* was to haggle with the Indian trappers over the purchase or trade of skins.

DIXIE, A name for the Southern States.

The exact origin of the name *Dixie* is not known.

One theory is that *Dixie* is a shortened form of *Mason and Dixon's Line*, a survey that once ran between some of the free and slave states.

A surprising version, found in a book on Americanisms, published in 1872, tells of a *Mr. Dixy* who owned a plantation on Manhattan Island when slavery still existed in New York state. Some of his slaves were sent to the South, where they languished and longed for their New York *Dixy Land*, a phrase that was adopted by Southern Negroes and used to designate the South.

A likelier theory is that the name originated in Louisiana before the war between the States. The Citizens' Bank of New Orleans issued ten-dollar bills on which was engraved a large *dix*, the French word for "ten." The bills were widely circulated in the South and were called *dixies*. The South, accordingly, was known as *the land of dixies*, or *Dixie Land*.

The song "*Dixie*" was written on a dreary winter morning in 1859, when Daniel Decatur Emmet, song writer and minstrel man, sat shivering in his cheerless New York lodgings

and longing for the warm sunshine "away down South in Dixie."

THE DOLLAR MARK

There are two logical theories as to how the dollar mark originated. The first explanation is that \$ is a simple monogram made by combining the letters U. S. It was used to distinguish American coins from the Spanish coins that circulated extensively in the young republic. The second theory is that \$ evolved from the Mexican sign *Ps* for *pesos* or *piastres* ("pieces of eight"), which were widely used before the adoption of the United States dollar in 1785.

DOUGHBOY, NOUN. *Popular name for the American soldier.*

The origin of the term *doughboy* is shrouded by obscurity. There are several theories, which I list here for what they may be worth. I vouch for none.

(1) As foot soldiers are obliged to march in heavy mud, or *dough*, during wet weather, they are called *doughboys*.

(2) The term had its origin in colonial days, when soldiers made liberal use of pipe clay to whiten certain parts of their uniforms. When it rained, the pipe clay became sticky and *doughlike*.

(3) The word *doughboy* once signified a small boiled dumpling of raised dough served aboard ship. The term, as applied to American soldiers, dates back to Civil War days when infantry uniforms are said to have been decorated with "large, globular brass buttons for all the world like dumplings, or *doughboys*."

(4) Frank Hall Childs, author of *Pacific Palisades*, California, advances this theory: During the Mexican War, or shortly thereafter, in the southwestern part of the United States, officers in army posts were quartered in frame buildings, whereas enlisted men were housed in adobe barracks, and were spoken of as *adobe boys*. The term was corrupted to *doby boys*, *dobe boys*, and finally to *doughboys*.

(5) It is said that the name *doughboy* was given to soldiers of Craufurd's Light Division in the Peninsular War, from their custom of grinding their own wheat and flour.

Although the term has long been known among soldiers of the regular army, it did not come into popular use until the United States entered the First World War.

DRUMMER

Question: Why are traveling salesmen called *drummers*?

Answer: Because they go out "to *drum up* business." The term is all but obsolete. *Traveling salesman* is much to be preferred.

ETAOIN SHRDLU

Question: What are the words I frequently see in newspaper articles: *etaoin shrdlu*?

Answer: These are known as *pi* (or *pie*) *lines*. A linotype operator sets them by running his finger down the first two banks of keys on the left of the keyboard, usually to indicate to the proofreader that part of the copy is missing or illegible.

EXCEPTION PROVES

Question: The adage *the exception proves the rule* doesn't make sense to me. Please explain.

Answer: We must remember that *prove* also means "to try," "to ascertain by experiment," "to test." Hence, we *prove*, or *test*, the correctness of a problem in mathematics. When we write a book, the printer sends us *proofs*, so that we may correct and revise before publication.

The adage means: "The exception *tests* (or *questions*) the rule."

FACE THE MUSIC

I have found three theories as to how this expression originated:

(1) It is of theatrical origin, first being used by actors who were nervously preparing to go before the footlights and literally *face the music* (the orchestra or the pianist).

(2) It is traced to the military formation. The soldier, in full equipment, stands at attention and *faces the music*.

(3) At a military execution, the condemned one is made to

stand facing both the firing squad and the music—that is, the bugler or the drum and bugle corps.

FIDDLEDEEDEE

Question: In *Gone With the Wind*, Scarlett O'Hara often uses the expression *fiddledeedee*! Was this a Southern expression, and what does it mean?

Answer: Scarlett uses *fiddledeedee* exactly as the youth of today say: *applesauce!* *baloney!*

Early in the last century *fiddledeedee* ("nonsense!" "away with such talk!") was popular in both England and the United States.

Swinburne wrote:

God, whom we see not, is; and God,
Who is not, we see:
Fiddle, we know, is *diddle*: and *diddle*,
We take it, is *dee*.

Other variations, some of which are still heard in the United States, are: *fiddlediddle*, *fiddle-faddle*, and *fiddle-sticks*.

Fiddle is commonly used in the meaning of "to fritter, or waste, away one's time."

FILIBUSTER

In the Congress of the United States, a *filibuster* is a respectable and legal method of delaying action or consuming time.

The word is from the Spanish *filibustero*, meaning "freebooter," "pirate."

Originally, it designated the buccaneers that infested the waters off the Spanish-American coast.

Authorities are silent on how this swashbuckling word of the Spanish Main degenerated to its present prosaic meaning, but obviously the first *filibusters* of Congress were so called because they pirated (stole or wasted) the valuable time of their fellow members.

GALOOT

This is a slang word of uncertain origin. Its meaning corresponds to the later *guy*, *bozo*. The best-known literary use of *galoot* is found in John Hay's poem *Jim Bludsoe of the Prairie Bell*:

I'll hold her nozzle agin the bank
Till the last *galoot's* ashore.

GO TO BLAZES

Blazes is simply a euphemism for "the infernal regions" or "the Devil." "He looked, upon my word, like Old *Blazes* himself, with his clothing all on fire."—*Southern Literary Messenger* (1849).

GO WEST

Question: Please give the exact wording of Horace Greeley's "Go west, young man."

Answer: "Go west, young man, and grow up with the country." But it did not originate with Greeley; he borrowed the phrase from John Soule, who first used it in 1851 in an article in the *Terre Haute Express*.

THE GOAT

Question: What is the origin of the expression *to make one the goat*?

Answer: It comes from the word *scapegoat*. Under Biblical law, the sins of the people were placed upon the head of a goat, which was then permitted to *escape* into the wilderness. (See Leviticus xvi: 10.)

GOTHAM

Question: How did New York get the name *Gotham*?

Answer: The American novelist, Washington Irving, first applied the epithet to New York in a satirical allusion to the story of *The Mad Men of Gotham* (Northamptonshire, England), who attempted to catch a cuckoo by planting a hedge around it. He used *Gothamite* in the sense of "a simple fellow."

NOSE TO THE GRINDSTONE

This is an allusion to the toilsome hours a farmer must spend in the spring to sharpen on the *grindstone* the various cutting implements of the farm. The word *grind*, in the meaning of "a long, monotonous task," has the same origin.

A man who had *an ax to grind*, but who possessed no *grindstone* of his own, would make what apparently was a purely social call on a neighbor for the purpose of having his ax ground without cost.

An ax to grind is an old expression. "Special legislation in behalf of private interests is one of the curses of this country. The number of axes which are taken to the various state capitols, to be ground at the public expense, is perfectly enormous."—*New York Tribune* (March 23, 1871).

GRINGO. *In Mexico, a name of contempt given to Americans.*

It is thought that *gringo* is a perversion of the Spanish word *griego*, meaning "Greek," a term once applied to any white foreigner in Latin America.

Another theory is that, during the Mexican War, soldiers of the United States sang as they marched: "*Green grow the rushes o'er. . .*" From the constant repetition of the song came the Mexican corruption *gringo* for *green grow*.

HOBO

The origin of *hobo* is uncertain. A plausible theory is that *hobo* is a corruption of *hoe boy*, a term formerly applied to migratory laborers who drifted from plantation to plantation seeking work *hoeing*, or "chopping," cotton.

HOODLUM, NOUN. *A rowdy; a young tough.*

In the early days of San Francisco, a gang of young ruffians was headed by a man named *Muldoon*. A newspaper reporter coined a name for the gang by spelling *Muldoon* backward: *noodlum*. A compositor changed the "n" to "h" in error, and it was allowed to stand. The word has been *hoodlum* ever since.

IDES OF MARCH

Question: What are the *ides of March*?

Answer: The term means, roughly, "the seven days in March ending with the fifteenth."

It was predicted that Julius Caesar would be assassinated in the *ides of March*. "Caesar said to the soothsayer: 'The *ides of March* are come,' who answered him calmly: 'Yes, they are come, but they are not past.'"—Plutarch.

INFANTRY, NOUN. *Foot soldiers.*

Question: Why are soldiers called (of all things!) *infantry*?

Answer: There is a wide difference of opinion among authorities. One says: "It is not clear how the word came to be used to mean 'foot soldiers.' " Another suggests that: "A foot soldier of feudal times was the varlet or follower of a mounted nobleman, and was called a *boy*, hence *infant*." Still another holds that: "Infantry means a collection of infants or juniors, so called by contrast with the proved veterans who compose the cavalry."

We are certain of nothing but this: The English *infantry*, the French *infanterie*, and the Italian and Spanish *infanteria* are all from the Latin *infans* ("infant") and mean "soldiers who march and who fight on foot."

INFLUENZA

Question: How did *influenza* get its name?

Answer: It is the Italian word for *influence*. Astrologers of Rome once believed that the disease was *influenced* by the stars and planets.

I. Q.

Question: Please let us know once and for all what *I. Q.* means.

Answer: The letters stand for *intelligence quotient*, and denote the intelligence of a person in relation to the average for his age.

If a child of ten, say, is found to have the average intelligence for his age, his *I. Q.*, or norm, is 100. If his mental age is equal to that of the average twelve-year-old, his *I. Q.* is 120.

Hence, a ten-year-old child with a mental age of eight years has an *I. Q.* of only 80.

(See MORON, page 180.)

JACK RABBIT

Question: Why the *jack* in *jack rabbit*?

Answer: The *jack rabbit* (formerly known as *mule rabbit*, *mule-eared rabbit*, *Texan hare*, *black-tailed hare*) was also known as the *jackass rabbit*, because of its inordinately long ears.

JAZZ

Question: What is the origin of the word *jazz*?

Answer: Authorities do not agree. *Jazz* is variously described as a word of African origin, a Creole word meaning "to speed up," a term long used by Southern Negroes, and a disreputable verb.

JINGO

A *jingo* is one who advocates a belligerent policy in foreign affairs. Newspapers that favor an aggressive or bellicose policy are termed *jingo*es, or referred to as *jingoistic*.

The expression is said to have originated in England more than sixty years ago when Disraeli, then Prime Minister, dispatched the British fleet to Turkish waters to halt the Russian advance. Popular approval was voiced in a music-hall song:

We don't want to fight,
But, *by jingo*, if we do,
We've got the ships,
We've got the men,
We've got the money, too.

JOB'S TURKEY

"He's as poor as *Job's turkey*," we say, thinking that we have used a correct Biblical reference. But poor, patient Job never saw a turkey, for the bird is native only to North America. The expression was slang in the last century and was usually heard thus: "As poor as *Job's turkey*, that had

but one feather to its tail" or ". . . that had to lean against a fence to gobble."

KICK THE BUCKET

It is said that this expression, denoting "suicide," originated in the gaol of former centuries. The prison cell contained a bucket and a pallet as the only furnishings.

The despondent prisoner who desired suicide circled his neck with his belt, which he fastened to an upper bar of the door. Then, by *kicking the bucket* from beneath his feet, he managed to hang himself.

KIDNAP

The word is from *kid* ("child") and *nab* or *nap* ("to seize"). The word is not new. It was first used in colonial days to designate the act of abducting workers for enforced labor in America.

Note: A similar verb is *shanghai*, meaning "to drug and abduct sailors for a ship's crew," a practice that apparently originated or was widely prevalent along the water front of Shanghai, China.

KITE

If I give you a check for which I have no money in the bank, hoping that somehow I shall be able to make an adequate deposit before the check is presented for payment, I am said to *kite the check*.

In former days, *kite flying* was a common practice whereby one unsound business concern financed its operations by exchanging worthless checks or drafts with another, thus furnishing fictitious capital for both houses to transact business with.

LB.

Question: Why is *lb.* the abbreviation for *pound*?

Answer: *Lb.* is the abbreviation for the ancient Roman *libra*, a balance, or unit of weight, similar to the modern pound.

LET IT SLIDE

Let it slide is an expression so ancient that it can be traced back to Chaucer, who wrote in his *Clerke's Tale* that Lord Walter was so fond of hawking that he "well-nigh *let all other cures slide*." In Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Christopher Sly says: "*Let the world slide!*"

MAKE NO BONES

It is said that this expression originated in England with people living on the coast. Eating their fish in haste, they declared that they *made no bones* about it—that is, they disregarded the bones.

MILE, NOUN. 5,280 feet.

The word *mile* is from the Latin *milia*, "a thousand." The ancient Roman mile was about 1,620 English yards, the theoretical distance covered by Roman soldiers in a thousand paces.

While England and the United States officially use the statute *mile* of 5,280 feet, most of the other nations are required by law to use the *kilometer* of the metric system. *Kilometer* means "1,000 meters," or "3,280.2 feet." (See KILOMETER, page 157.)

Note: The *foot* as a measure of length has been in wide use for centuries. It was originally derived from the average length of the human foot.

The length of the *inch* was anciently established as "three grains of barley dry and round," placed end to end and measured lengthwise.

MUSCLE

Question: May we have the origin of the word *muscle*?

Answer: *Muscle* is the French degeneration of the Latin *musculus*, which means—and who would have thought it?—"little mouse"!

Women, then, who admire the muscular development of some brawny athlete, may exclaim literally: "What a handsome man! He has such large *little mice*!"

NEWS

Question: Is it true that the word *news* comes from the directions of the compass: *N* for *north*, *E* for *east*, *W* for *west*, and *S* for *south*?

Answer: The word *news* has no connection with the points of the compass. *News* is simply "new, or recent, tidings or information." Formation of the word with "s" undoubtedly was influenced by the French word for *news*: *nouvelles*.

NO.

Question: As there is no letter "o" in the word *number*, why is *No.* the abbreviation?

Answer: *No.* is the abbreviation of the word *numero*, from the Latin *numerus*, meaning "number."

Numero also is found in French as a word for *number*.

NOT YOUR FUNERAL

"It is *not your funeral*," we say to a person who is unduly concerned about the misfortunes of another. The allusion, of course, is obvious; but there is more to the phrase than a mere apt, though grisly, figure of speech.

The expression originated long ago when the settlers of America lived so great a distance from one another that it was often impossible to obtain a clergyman to conduct a funeral service. The *funeral* (that is, the sermon and religious service) was sometimes held as long as a year or two after the actual burial. As the family's grief had been allayed by time, such *funerals* were notable for feasting, drinking, and merry-making as friends and kinsmen came from a distance to pay their respects to the departed.

It was inevitable that the early American version of the gate crasher should be attracted in goodly numbers to so delightful and festive an occasion. And these troublesome intruders, we may be sure, were sternly rebuked and sent about their business. "This," they were told, "is *not your funeral*!"

NUTMEG STATE

Question: Why is Connecticut known as the *Nutmeg State*? Is it because nutmegs grow there?

Answer: Nutmegs are not native to North America. They are found wild on certain islands of the Pacific.

The nickname *Nutmeg State* was given to Connecticut in allusion to an old story that wooden nutmegs were made there and sold abroad as genuine by shrewd Yankee traders.

Yankee Ballad

The Empire State is your New York;
I grant it hard to mate her;
Yet still give me the *Nutmeg State*,
Where shall we find a greater [*grater*]?

O.K. *Correct; satisfactory; good; all right.*

Question: Will you please give us the origin of the expression O.K.?

Answer: We are certain of nothing but this: our word of all work, *O.K.* (*okay* or *okeh*), is as American in origin as "Yankee Doodle," although it has been borrowed by every nationality under the sun. It is said on good authority that *O.K.* has even largely replaced the traditional *righto* in British speech.

The new *Webster's* states that perhaps *O.K.* originated in the Choctaw (Indian) *oke*, or *hoke*, meaning "Yes, it is." If so, it was adopted early in the life of this nation, for the expression has been known since colonial days.

Several persons have suggested that *O.K.* is but a shortened form of the old Greek expression "*Ola Kalla*," meaning roughly "it is correct." But the Chancellor of the Royal Greek Legation, Washington, D. C., thinks that the American *O.K.* has no connection with the Greek phrase.

A scholar of Quincy, Massachusetts, believes that *O.K.* had its origin several hundred years ago in an expression common among Norwegian and Danish sailors: *H. G.* (pronounced: hah gay). The expression meant "shipshape," "ready for action." *H. G.* was a shortened form of the Anglo-Saxon *höf gör*, "ready for the sea."

Here is another theory from a book on Americanisms written by De Vere in 1872: "General Andrew Jackson, better known in American history as 'Old Hickory,' was not much at home in the art of spelling. The President employed the

letters *O.K.* as an endorsement of applications for office, and other papers. They were intended to stand for 'All Correct,' which the old gentleman preferred writing 'Oll Korrekt'; and hence they are used, to this day, very much in the sense of the English 'All Right.' "

Is it *O.K.* to use *O.K.*? Why not? As a sound and venerable American colloquialism that has caught the popular fancy of the world, it is *O.K.*

ON THE FENCE

A man who sits *on a fence* can with equal ease jump down on either side.

As J. R. Lowell expressed it:

A kind o' hangin' round and
settin' on the fence,
Till Providence pointed how to jump
an' save the most expense.

—*The Biglow Papers*

ONE-HORSE

The term of opprobrium *one-horse* takes us back to pre-automobile days when any person of consequence drove about in a *rig* behind a team of spanking trotters. A *one-horse rig* was the jalopy of the time.

OUIJA

Question: Was the *ouija board* named for its inventor?

Answer: No. The name was coined from the French *oui* and the German *ja*, both meaning "yes."

PEDIGREE

Pedigree is a corruption of the French *pied de grue*, meaning—of all things!—"a crane's foot"!

In old documents dealing with family trees, descent was indicated by a mark consisting of a vertical stroke and two slanting strokes converging at the bottom, resembling the imprint of a crane's foot. It's hard to believe, but your *pedigree* is simply "the foot of a crane."

PHI BETA KAPPA

Question: Do the Greek letters *Phi Beta Kappa* stand for anything but the name of the fraternity?

Answer: Yes. The letters stand for the motto of the fraternity: *Philosophia Biou Kybernetes*, meaning "Philosophy, the Guide of Life."

Phi Beta Kappa is the oldest Greek letter society in the United States. It was founded at William and Mary College, Virginia, in 1776. Membership and the key, badge of the order, are conferred only on students of exceptional scholastic attainments. While the fraternity has a grip and a password, it is not a secret society in the sense of the usual college fraternity.

PIN MONEY

Pins were once made by hand, and cost as much as one dollar a dozen. Housewives, therefore, resorted to various expedients (as many still do) to earn *pin money*, or to wheedle it out of the reluctant pockets of their spouses.

At one time in England, a husband was required by law to set aside a certain sum of *pin money* for his wife's exclusive use.

Few pins are bought today, except for use in offices and shirt factories. The chief concern of women of this era is how to get *zipper money*.

PIPE DOWN

Aboard ship, the crew is *pipéd* to work by the boatswain's whistle. As the members of each watch are piped up on deck for duty, the retiring watch is *pipéd down* to quarters, hence the meaning "to dismiss from duty," "to cease talking."

PIT

Question: Please explain the exact location of the *pit* in a theater. How can this word, which means "a hole" or "a cavity," be used for "a section of seats"?

Answer: In the earliest theaters of England, the *pit* was an actual pit or sunken portion of the floor in front of the stage. Here the common people stood and saw the play without

obstructing the view of the gentry in the stalls farther back. Later, the cheapest section was moved behind the stalls and, by association, continued to be known as the *pit*.

But in the United States the *pit* invariably refers to the *orchestra pit*, a recessed section reserved for musicians and located immediately in front of the stage.

Hywel C. Rowland, Head of the Music Department of the University of North Dakota, states: "The old English theaters were often inn-yards. The *pit* may easily have meant the *manure pit* which occupied the center of most inn-yards. *Stalls* may have been the places where animals were tied; *boxes* may also have been a "stable" word originally. The balcony in such inns ran around the yards, and bedrooms, or lofts, opened out of this balcony. *Barnstorming* is easily understood if we keep the history of the theater in mind. *Orchestra* is from the Greek and means "a dancing place."

P's and Q's

In the old taverns, a record was kept of the liquor purchases of the guests by tallying the pints and quarts as they were imbibed. Seasoned travelers minded their *P's and Q's* carefully in order that they might not be overcharged.

PULL THE WOOL

According to De Vere (1871): "*To pull wool over the eyes*, as is done to make sheep go into the water or into the pen where they are to be shorn, means proverbially to blind one's judgment."

Note: Hoodwink refers to the hood with which falcons were blinded and rendered tractable.

RUB OUT

Question: Please give the origin of the underworld expression *to rub out*, meaning "to kill."

Answer: Strangely, the expression originated long ago in England. It is said to be derived from the custom of rubbing out the names of friends on the slate or visiting list.

It is not a new phrase in the United States. I find it in a book on the far West (dated 1831), thus: "'*Rubbed out* at

last,' they heard him say as he turned on his side and breathed his last."

RUBBER

Question: How did *rubber* get its name? Doesn't *rubber* mean "a thing or person that rubs"?

Answer: When this gum, *caoutchouc* (pronounced: KOO-chōōk), was first marketed, it had one purpose only: to rub out pencil marks; hence the name (*India*) *rubber*.

SCOT-FREE

Question: Why the expression *scot-free*? I've always understood that the Scots are anything but free.

Answer: *Scot-free* has no connection with either Scots or Scotland. A *scot* (spelled with small "s") is "a tax or assessment of money." *Scot-free* means "without payment of scot," hence "free of cost or penalty."

SCREWBALL, SLANG. *A crazy, eccentric person.*

Originally, *screwball* was a baseball term. It described a type of pitched ball that gyrated crazily in the air. It was first introduced by Carl Hubbell of the New York *Giants*.

A *screwball*, then, is a fellow whose actions are eccentric, fanatic, unpredictable.

SEVEN SEAS

Figuratively, this expression means "all the oceans of the world." Literally, the *seven seas* are the North and South Atlantic, the North and South Pacific, the Arctic, the Antarctic, and the Indian oceans.

SKITTLES

Question: Recently, I read this line in a poem: "Their appetites were whetted by the sight of beer and *skittles*." Where may one purchase a *skittle*? I'd like to serve one to my husband.

Answer: At a *skittle alley*. It would be pretty hard on the digestion, though. *Skittles* is an English game similar to bowling.

According to Dickens, an Englishman's idea of a pleasant

evening is one spent *playing skittles* and drinking beer: "It's a regular holiday to them—all porter and *skittles*. . . . Down-hearted fellers as can't svig away at the beer, nor play at *skittles* neither."—*The Pickwick Papers*.

SKYLARK

To skylark has no connection with the bird of that name. It was originally a nautical term that described the larks or tricks of sailors as they ran about and frolicked in the high rigging of ships.

SLANG

Question: How did the word *slang* originate?

Answer: The origin is obscure. One theory is that *slang* derived from the word *language*, as in: "*thieve(s' lang)uage*," "*beggar(s' lang)uage*."

SNOOD

Question: Was the word *snood* known before Civil War days?

Answer: Yes. The *snood*, variously spelled *snod*, *snude*, *sneud*, *snoud*, *snead*, *sneiad*, *snid*, and *sneed*, is found in literature dated as early as 725 A.D.

Originally, the *snood* was worn only by young unmarried women, and it was strictly an emblem of maidenhood. In Scott's *Lady of the Lake* appear these lines:

Yet ne'er again to bind her hair
The virgin *snood* did Alice wear.

SO LONG

This popular form of farewell has no literal meaning. It is said to be a shortened corruption of the Moslem salutation *salaam aleikum*, "may peace be upon you," pronounced: suh-LAHM uh-LY-kōom.

It was imported by Africans brought to this country as slaves, says one authority.

S O S. A code signal of distress.

Question: Is it true that S O S is an abbreviation for *Save our ship* or *Save our souls*?

Answer: No. *S O S*, a call for help, was adopted in 1918 by the Radiotelegraphic Convention. The letters do not stand for any words. They are used because they are easily transmitted and received. The Continental code letters are “... --- ...”, described by radio and telegraph operators as “dit dit dit, dah dah dah, dit dit dit.”

S O S superseded *C Q D*, which is thought by some to have meant: “Come quick! Danger!” But *C Q D*, like *S O S*, is not an abbreviation and has no verbal significance.

SPICK, *A slang term for a Latin American.*

Spick is a variant of *spiggoty*, which is said to have originated with the Navy in the Panama Canal Zone from the often repeated phrase of the natives, *no spik-a de Inglees*.

Spik-a de became *spiggoty*, and later was shortened to *spick*.

SPINSTER

Question: What is the origin of the term *spinster*, meaning “old maid”?

Answer: Strangely enough, *spinsters* originally were young women who prepared for marriage by spinning the thread and weaving the linens of their trousseaus.

Since hope springs eternal in the human breast, many women continued to spin long after they had passed the marriageable age, and they are called *spinsters* to this good day.

Note: *Old maid* means, literally, “a maiden (unmarried woman) of advanced years.”

SPITTIN' IMAGE

One theory, which has been found to be erroneous, is that *spittin' image* is a Southern Negro corruption of *spirit and image*.

A writer, whose name is now forgotten, advanced this artful explanation: *Spittin' image* is nothing but a mispronunciation of *spittoon image*: that is, the reduced but faithful reflection one sees in the side of a clean bright spittoon all newly polished.

Dictionaries state that the expression should be *spit and image*, a term that was prevalent in England in the seven-

teenth century. It was based on the popular notion that a person's saliva contains the essence of his being.

The expression is dialectal.

SPOONERISM

A *spoonerism*, named for the English clergyman, William A. Spooner (1844 to 1930), is "the accidental transposing of sounds or syllables of two or more words," as: "a scottle of botch" for *a bottle of Scotch* or "polief cheese" for *police chief*.

It is said that the good doctor once announced at morning service: "We will now sing 'The Kinquering Congs Their Titles Take.'" He is also reported to have requested a railway guard: "Please wrap my bugs in the rag."

Perhaps the most hilarious "double talk" attributed to the reverend doctor is supposed to have occurred one morning at church, when he approached a woman worshiper and asked: "Mardon me, padam, aren't you occupewing the wrong pie?"

Said she: "Yank tou for thelling me. What a cheautiful burch this is!"

Dr. Spooner proudly replied: "Ah, yes, many thinkle peep so."

STOOL PIGEON

Question: What is the origin of the term *stool pigeon*?

Answer: Before the wild pigeon became extinct, it was the custom of hunters to fasten a captive pigeon to a stool. The poor bird was moved up and down from a place of concealment. It fluttered anxiously and attracted passing flocks of its fellows into the fowler's net. Hence, a *stool pigeon* is "a decoy," "a police spy."

STUNT

Question: What is the origin of the word *stunt*?

Answer: The origin is uncertain. Some authorities believe it may be a variant of *stint*, "a task."

SUIT TO A "T"

This expression refers to the "*T*" square with which the trueness of the work of a carpenter or mason is proved.

An' John P.
Robinson, he
Sez this is his view o' the thing *to a "T."*
—*The Biglow Papers*

SWEET CHARITY

Question: What is the origin of the quotation: "*Sweet Charity, what sins are committed in thy name?*"

Answer: This is a corruption of the famous apostrophe of Madame Roland, who, before her death by the guillotine in 1793, paused before the Statue of Liberty in the Place de la Revolution, and said: "*O, Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!*"

TALK TURKEY

This expressive phrase has been common in the speech of America for more than a century. But its original meaning was opposite to the present-day "to talk frankly or bluntly," "to get down to facts." In pioneer days, it meant "to talk in a silly, foolish, untruthful way." According to De Vere, it came "from the extremely ludicrous way in which the wild turkey during pairing-time gobbles while strutting about on a branch, with eyes closed, and feathers spread out wide."

Authorities fail to tell us why the meaning of *to talk turkey* has, in the last century, executed a complete about-face. But I believe the reason may be found in an old story that has been sent to me in several variations by a number of readers of my newspaper column:

A white man and an Indian went hunting. Between them they bagged a turkey and a buzzard. When it was time to divide the game, the white man said to the Indian: "I'll take the turkey, and you take the buzzard; or you take the buzzard, and I'll take the turkey."

Said the Indian: "Ugh! Why you no talk turkey to *me?*"

TANTALIZE

Question: I seem to recall an interesting story about the origin of the word *tantalize*. Can you give it to us?

Answer: In Greek mythology, the wicked King of Phrygia,

Tantalus by name, outraged the gods by causing his son Pelops to be cooked and served as food at a feast.

To punish him through eternity, the gods secured Tantalus in a pool of cool water at the edge of which grew many trees heavy with delicious and exotic fruits. When Tantalus tried to pluck an orange or pomegranate, the branches moved just beyond his reach. When he bent to quench his thirst, the waters shrank away from his agonized lips.

TWO BITS, *Quarter of a dollar; twenty-five cents.*

Question: How did the Western slang phrase *two bits* originate?

Answer: The United States colloquialism (not slang) has a romantic history.

The *bit* originally was the Spanish *real* (ray-AHL), or "piece of eight." It was usually referred to in multiples, as: *two bits, four bits, six bits*. Its value was twelve and a half cents, or one eighth of the Spanish-American coin *peso*, or "pillar dollar," so called for the two Pillars of Hercules on its reverse side.

During the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century, the silver pillar dollar circulated in the West Indies and parts of the American mainland. Because of the scarcity of small change, *cut money* was obtained by cutting the pillar dollar into halves, quarters, and eighths, with values of *four bits, two bits, and one bit*.

When American small coins began to circulate, they also were known as *two-bit pieces, four-bit pieces*, etc., and they are still so called by a large number of Americans.

UNCLE SAM

Question: What is the origin of the nickname *Uncle Sam*?

Answer: It is said that *Uncle Sam*, for the United States, had its origin during the War of 1812.

A Mr. Samuel Wilson, known to his kinsfolk and friends as *Uncle Sam*, was a Government inspector. He received, at Troy, New York, large shipments of supplies and munitions for the Army. The bales, casks, boxes, and barrels were all marked with the initials *U. S.*

Says De Vere: "A facetious workman, being asked the meaning of the letters *U. S.*, in jest replied that he did not know, unless they meant *Uncle Sam*. The jest took, was repeated by other workmen, and by them carried into the Army. Thus the name spread from the Commissary's barrel of beans throughout the land, and has never since lost its hold upon the public mind."

For I have loved my country since
My eye-teeth filled their sockets;
And *Uncle Sam* I reverence,
Partic'larly his pockets.

—*The Biglow Papers*

UP THE SPOUT

Question: What is the origin of the expression *gone up the spout*?

Answer: The expression originated in pre-Civil War days. Most pawnshops of the period had a metal chute that extended from the shop to the office, on the floor above, where the safe was located. When articles were pawned, they were ticketed and placed in a receptacle and pulled *up the chute* or *spout*, to be deposited in the office safe.

Since many pawned articles are never redeemed, the allusion is obvious.

WHITE ELEPHANT

Question: What is the origin of the expression *white elephant*?

Answer: When the King of Siam was displeased with one of his courtiers, he presented him with a royal gift: a *white elephant*.

Since the white elephant was sacred and could not be sold, given away, or destroyed, the expense of keeping the beast in the traditional luxury decreed for its kind usually meant bankruptcy for the unfortunate owner.

WILDCAT

The term *wildcat* has largely outlived the original meaning of "a dishonest, illegitimate enterprise."

Today, in the parlance of the petroleum industry, a *wild-cat* is merely "an oil well drilled in unproved territory." But early in the last century a certain bank in Michigan ruined tens of thousands of its depositors when it was found to be utterly insolvent after having issued large numbers of bank-notes on the face of which was handsomely engraved the picture of a wildcat.

WILD-GOOSE CHASE

Question: Will you please tell us how the expression *wild-goose chase* originated?

Answer: From the impossibility of catching the swift and wary wild goose by chasing it.

THE WORM TURNED

Question: What caused the *worm to turn*, and what did he do when he did turn?

Answer: He must have cried "Ouch!" for in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI* we read: "*The smallest worm will turn, being trodden on.*"

YANKEE

Question: What is the origin of the word *Yankee*?

Answer: There are several theories. It has been suggested that *Yankee* is a corruption of the Dutch name *Jan Kees*, which was a derisive term for the Dutch settlers of early New England.

An attempt has been made to trace the word to the verb *yank*, descriptive of the energy and strength of the first white inhabitants of America, as: "The *yankers* overcome all difficulties."

Yankee was the name of a strong drink, made of whiskey and molasses, once popular in New England. We find it mentioned in a little known verse of Yankee Doodle:

You fine Miss Boston Lady gay,
For this your speech I thank ye,
Call on me, when you come this way,
And take a dram of *Yankee*.

In *Thatcher's Military Journal* is an article about a farmer of Cambridge, Massachusetts, named Jonathan Hastings (about 1713) who used *yankee* as a favorite word to express "excellence," as: "a *yankee* good horse," "*yankee* good cider." The cant word spread and was later applied as a jocose pet name to any American of the Northern States.

Layard's book, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, gives *yanghi-dunia* as the Persian name of *America*.

Attempts have been made to trace the word to two Chinese characters *yong kee*, said to signify "the flag of the ocean."

Janker (the "j" is pronounced "y") is reported to be an old Dutch verb, meaning "to growl" or "to scold." It was applied to the early settlers of Massachusetts as a term of derision.

In *Americanisms*, by De Vere, is a likelier theory: "The best authorities on the subject now agree upon the derivation of this term from the imperfect effort made by the Northern Indians to pronounce the word *English*. They pronounced it: Yengees.

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FRANK COLBY

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